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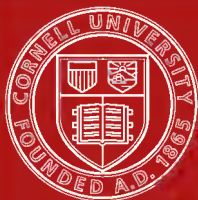
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THE OLD TESTAMENT  
IN THE LIGHT OF THE RELIGION OF  
BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

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# THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE LIGHT OF THE RELIGION OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

BY

J. EVANS THOMAS, B.D.



LONDON  
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

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## PREFACE

My object is to give a summary of the recent discoveries which have been made in Babylonia and Assyria, and to show that the lawgivers, poets, and prophets of Israel had many religious ideas and experiences which were held in common with the Babylonians and Assyrians. The resemblances and differences between the Babylonian and Assyrian religious literature and the Old Testament narratives are pointed out, and I have endeavoured to show the relations which existed between the Old Testament and the religious literature of the Babylonians and Assyrians.

The quotations which I have given from the Babylonian and Assyrian tablets are, on the whole, comparatively short, but I hope that brevity has not done injustice to the context. My object is to present a fairly comprehensive idea of the discoveries that have been made on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, and to show that the Old Testament writers were indebted to the religious peoples of Babylonia and Assyria; and in the last chapter an effort is made to state the relation which exists between the Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions and Biblical criticism.

I am well aware of the limitations of the book, which is meant to be comprehensive rather than exhaustive; and the readers who are desirous of obtaining further knowledge can turn to more elaborate works on the subject.

A reliable résumé of the last five-and-twenty years' excavation is to be found in Mr. Cormack's book on *Egypt in Asia*, which is a plain account of pre-Biblical Syria and Palestine. The book has a valuable bibliography at the end.

References are made in footnotes to the authors to whom I am deeply indebted, and I feel that my indebtedness cannot be adequately expressed in terms. I have had to rely on some of them for the translations, but have used my own judgment in the choice of subject-matter for this book.

My desire has been to bring the subject within reach of the average reader, so as to make it more widely known, and in that way to advance the cause of truth and righteousness.

I believe that the religious literature of the Babylonians and Assyrians, which represents the faith and yearning of the human heart of long, long ago, was prompted by the Creator of the universe. For "He hath made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He is not far off from each one of us : for in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 26, 27). Max Müller said : "We can hear in all religions a groaning of the spirit, a struggle to conceive the inconceivable, to utter the unutterable, a longing after the infinite, a love of God."

I have to acknowledge the valuable help rendered by the kind friends who assisted me in the preparation of this book.

JOHN EVANS THOMAS.

EAST HAM, LONDON,  
*February, 1909.*

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# THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE LIGHT OF THE RELIGION OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

## CHAPTER I

### THE BABYLONIAN AND ASSYRIAN INSCRIPTIONS

UP to fifty or sixty years ago the early history of the origin of all things was confined almost entirely to the Old Testament. But an unexpected light has appeared, which reveals the history of antiquity. It seems as if Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, Phoenicia, Bashan, Moab, Arabia, and other countries, became weary of concealing their treasures. For a considerable time the Old Testament was considered as the source of light, but discoveries have been made within comparatively recent years that throw light on the Old Testament itself. We possess facts unknown to the men of a hundred years ago. The light we have was hidden from their eyes, and the Old Testament history is tried in the light of the recently discovered inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria.

How was it discovered? Where was it found? After much labour by intelligent and scholarly men,



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old tablets were unearthed, and the inscriptions which they contained were at last translated, after many a fruitless effort.

The manner in which the old tablets were entombed and preserved for thousands of years is most wonderful, and the way the tombs have given up their dead is equally marvellous. "The dead shall be raised up" is a prophecy which has been partly fulfilled. "Facts," it is said, "are stubborn things," and in this instance they are stranger than fiction. At one period Babylonia, Assyria, and other countries, were adorned with beautiful palaces, ornate temples, and magnificent edifices. But Fortune did not always smile on the inhabitants. Time did to the old Babylonians and Assyrians what it has repeatedly done since. History repeats itself, and it began early. There was a rise and fall in the history of the kingdoms. When the land was deserted, with no people left to take charge of the buildings and keep them in a good state of repair, the grand edifices fell into ruins; the sun, the rain, and the frost ground them into dust. Nothing remained to all outward appearance but old mounds, clothed with green grass and beautiful flowers. "Soon the centre of human progress passed from the Mesopotamian Valley westward to the regions of Southern Europe. Babylonia and Assyria were forgotten. Their cities, too, reared upon platforms of sun-dried bricks, and raised in solid masses of the same fragile material to no great height, had



been ruined by fire and sword, and gradually melted away under the disintegrating forces of Nature, until they became huge and shapeless mounds of earth, without anything to identify them as having been once the abode of men.”<sup>1</sup>

The mounds appeared like natural elevations, and in this manner the interior was preserved from two destructive agencies—that of ignorant men and the ravages of the atmosphere. The vivid impression made by these ruins has been strikingly described by Layard: “The observer is now at a loss to give any form to the rude heaps upon which he is gazing. Those of whose works they are the remains, unlike the Roman and the Greek, have left no visible traces of their civilization or of their arts: their influence has long since passed away. The more he conjectures, the more vague the results appear. The scene around is worthy of the ruin he is contemplating; desolation meets desolation; a feeling of awe succeeds to wonder; for there is nothing to relieve the mind, to lead to hope, or to tell of what has gone by. These huge mounds of Assyria made deeper impression upon me, gave rise to more serious thought and more earnest reflection, than the temples of Babel or the theatres of Ionia.”<sup>2</sup>

To excavate the mounds has been a very laborious

<sup>1</sup> *A History of the Babylonians and Assyrians*, by Goodspeed, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. i., p. 29.

work, but the task of translating the inscriptions has been far more arduous. The writing material was of various kinds. The letters or characters were incised upon stone and metal. They appeared on marbles of palaces, on the smooth surfaces of gems, on plates of bronze, and on silver images. There have been discovered traces of skins as writing material, and a substance somewhat similar to the papyrus of ancient Egypt. But a very fine clay was the material most extensively used, which was very plentiful in Babylonia; and clay was generally used in the ancient Eastern countries. Great care was taken in manufacturing the clay, which was cast into various forms, varying in size. After the clay had been prepared, a stylus was used to impress the characters. Sometimes the material was in the shape of cones and of barrel-shaped cylinders. These tablets were either dried in the sun or baked in a furnace, and thus the writing became so permanent that destruction was impossible unless the tablet was shattered into fragments. This method became so prevalent that picture-writing, which was once in vogue, was abandoned.

I must confine myself to the discoveries that throw light on the Old Testament. Important discoveries have been made in the land of Canaan that throw a great deal of direct and indirect light upon the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> The most valuable treasure unearthed

<sup>1</sup> *Canaan d'après l'Exploration récente*, by Father Hugues Vincent.

in the land of the Pharaohs has been the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, which have brought Canaan into clearer light.<sup>1</sup> These tablets prove that the language and the letters of Babylonia were well known to the Canaanites. All the chiefs of Canaan, and even of Cyprus, availed themselves of the Babylonian writing and language, and wrote on the clay tablets like the Babylonians, and the Babylonian tongue was the official language of diplomatic intercourse from the Euphrates to the Nile. It is evident that the Babylonian culture and literature influenced Canaan and other countries from 2200 to beyond 1400 B.C. It is very difficult to say to what extent Babylonia did exercise that influence. "It has often been said that the inscriptions of the ancient Sumerians are without much intrinsic value, that they mainly consist of dull votive formulæ, and that for general interest the best of them cannot be compared with the later inscriptions of the Semitic inhabitants of Mesopotamia. This reproach, for which until recently there was considerable justification, has been finally removed by the working out of the texts upon Gudea's cylinders. For picturesque narrative, for wealth of detail, and for striking similes, it would be hard to find their superior in Babylonian and Assyrian literature. They are, in fact, very remarkable compositions, and in themselves justify the claim

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt and Western Asia in the Light of Recent Discoveries*, by King and Hall.

that the Sumerians were possessed of a literature in the proper sense of the term.

“ But that is not their only value, for they give a vivid picture of ancient Sumerian life, and of the ideals and aims which actuated the people and their rulers.

“ But perhaps the most interesting conclusions to be drawn from the texts relate to the influence exerted by the ancient Sumerians upon Semitic beliefs and practices. It has, of course, long been recognized that the later Semitic inhabitants of Babylonia and Assyria drew most of their culture from the Sumerians, whom they displaced and absorbed. Their system of writing, the general structure of their temples, the ritual of their worship, the majority of their religious compositions, and many of their gods themselves, are to be traced to a Sumerian origin ; and much of the information obtained from the cylinders of Gudea merely confirms or illustrates the conclusions already deduced from other sources.”<sup>1</sup>

Our chief purpose in quoting the above passage is to show how difficult is the task of proving to what degree one nation has influenced the beliefs and customs of another, or, in other words, to what extent were the Canaanites influenced by the Babylonians and Assyrians. That Canaan, when invaded by the twelve

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt and Western Asia in the Light of Recent Discoveries*, by King and Hall, p. 215 *et seq.*

tribes of Israel, was more or less pervaded by Babylonian culture, is beyond a doubt. "And the tablets of Tel-el-Amarna (*circa* 1400 B.C.) are the clearest evidence how well founded the claim was, and how profound and penetrating the influence of Babylonia over Palestine was during these 'dark ages.' From these tablets it appears that Babylonian was the *lingua franca* of the leading nations of the East, the channel of official communication between the peoples of Palestine, Egypt, etc. The more recent discoveries of Lachish, Gezer, and Taanach show that Babylonian was the language commonly used in Palestine, not merely for official correspondence, but likewise for private letters, business accounts, and State records. The evidence of language is not to be lightly ruled out of court, as it is by Budde and Giesbrecht, for example. The analogy which the latter adduces is, indeed, an illuminating illustration to the contrary. The use of French as the language of diplomacy does not imply present French domination, but does point to an earlier period when French influence was widespread. The history of the eighteenth century completely justifies the assumption. The Tel-el-Amarna letters bear witness to a similar prevalence of Babylonian influence in the old world. The spirit of the people may, indeed, remain fresh and strong under the dress of a foreign language; but the adoption of that dress involves the acceptance of much besides—foreign

influence also in clothing, manners, customs, art, etc." <sup>1</sup>

It is the Babylonian and Assyrian literature that is most intimately connected with some of the narratives in the Old Testament. The history of Babylonia and Assyria was very defective until quite recently. The only sources of information at hand were the Old Testament and the works of Herodotus. Eusebius, Syncellus, and Diodorus quote from other works, and are not reliable. The first two were the only original or direct sources, and as they only refer to political questions, the history of the Babylonian religion was very meagre indeed. If all the information contained in the most ancient sources of the religion of Babylonia and Assyria were collected together, the result would be only a mere outline. The inscriptions of ancient Babylonia and Assyria are of the highest value. In their light, we can see how the civilization of Greece and Rome made such a rapid and wonderful progress in such a short period. And not only that, but the history of Israel till the return from captivity can be reconstructed to a remarkable extent in the light of the tablets.

There is another thing that strikes us very forcibly. We perceive the same fundamental principles in the history of ancient Babylonia and Assyria as we witness

<sup>1</sup> *The Early Traditions of Genesis*, by Gordon, pp. 66, 67. See *Bible Side-Lights from the Mount of Gezer*, by Macalister.

in modern history. Kepler, as he looked on the planetary system moving in accordance with the laws which he had discovered, saw the expressiveness of the system, and exclaimed : “ O God, I read Thy thoughts after Thee !” He who can see the plans and principles of God realized in the advancement of the human race through the centuries may well exclaim : “ O God, I read Thy thoughts after Thee !” “ Until far into the last century the Old Testament formed a world by itself ; it spoke of times to whose latest limits the age of classical antiquity only just reaches, and of peoples of whom there is no mention, or only a passing reference, among Greek and Roman writers. From about 550 B.C. onwards the Bible was the only source for the history of the Nearer East, and, since its range of vision spreads over the whole of the great quadrilateral between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, from Ararat to Ethiopia, it is full of problems the solution of which would never, perhaps, have been successfully achieved. Now, at a stroke, the walls that have shut off the remoter portion of the Old Testament scene of action fall, and a cool quickening breeze from the East, accompanied by a flood of light, breathes through and illuminates the whole of the time-honoured Book—all the more intensely because Hebrew antiquity from beginning to end is closely linked with this same Babylonia and Assyria.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Babel and Bible*, by F. Delitzsch, pp. 6, 7.

## CHAPTER II

### BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

I WILL give a very brief outline of the history of Babylonia and Assyria, so that the relation which existed between the religions of these two countries and Israel may be better understood. The Babylonians and the Assyrians were living in the regions of the Euphrates and the Tigris. The Babylonians lived in the southern part—that is, in the valley of the Euphrates ; and the Assyrians dwelt in the north-east, in the region which extended from the Tigris as far as the Kurdish Mountain. The north-western part of Mesopotamia, the northern half of the Euphrates, was the seat of various empires which were one day rivals and the next day the subjects of Babylonia and Assyria.<sup>1</sup>

The Babylonians and the Assyrians belonged to the same branch of the Semitic race. It is true that the regions where these two peoples lived differed, and so did the peoples themselves. They differed in habits and modes of thought, as the districts differed from each other in natural surroundings. There are common

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 26.



characteristics between them and also marked differences. The Assyrians were rough and more warlike than the Babylonians, and when they attained strength it was used in the consolidation of their military power. The Babylonians were ambitious to enlarge their dominion, but presented a more peaceful character than their neighbours, a virtue which induced them to cultivate commerce and industrial arts. Though their characteristics differed in many respects, yet they had more in common than in distinction.

As we have already stated, the Babylonians were a branch of the great Semitic race ; and of all the divisions there remain the Jews and the Arabs, which are the only important branches left. There was a time when the Semites were the most influential of all the races on the face of the earth. Their influence was conspicuous in the formation of the Egyptian civilization.

History begins in Babylonia, and not in Assyria, and the oldest religion is that of Babylonia. It is impossible to determine the time when the Babylonians became finally separated from the Semitic stock, and settled in the valley of the Euphrates.

It is a debatable question whether there are any traces of other people having settled beside the Semitic Babylonians in the earliest history of the valley of the Euphrates. The probability is that there were other settlers. These non-Semitic settlers who preceded the Babylonians in the possession of the valley of the

Euphrates were called Sumerians and Akkadians. The origin of the name is Sumer and Akkad, which are often found in Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions in connection with the Kings' titles. As to the precise locality where they dwelt, it is very uncertain whether Sumer was in the north and Akkad in the south, or Akkad in the north and Sumer in the south. Of the two, the former supposition is the more probable. It may be that they governed Babylonia at one time. It is believed that the Semites were nearly as old as the Sumerians, especially in culture. Perhaps it is not safe to say more than that the evidences we have tend to prove the theory that a people of a different nationality dwelt in the valley of the Euphrates from the earliest times known to us. Therefore the Semites who settled in the land did not inhabit the whole of the country, but there dwelt by their side another race, or perhaps races, that possessed different characteristics. No positive proof is forthcoming that Sumer and Akkad were ever employed or understood in any other sense than geographical terms.

“ At every point we come across evidence of the composite character of Babylonian culture, and the question of the origin of the latter may, after all, resolve itself into the proposition that the contact of the different races gave the intellectual impetus which is the first condition of a forward movement in civilization; and while it is possible that at one stage the

greater share in the movement falls to the non-Semitic contingent, the Semites soon obtained the intellectual ascendancy, and so absorbed the non-Semitic elements as to give the culture resulting from the combination the homogeneous character it presents on the surface." <sup>1</sup>

According to the facts available at the present time, the history of Babylonia goes back to the era about 4000 B.C., when the valley of the Euphrates was divided into States, parcelling North and South Babylonia between them. These States group themselves around certain cities.

The chronology of the period from about 4000 B.C. to 2300 B.C. is uncertain. Future discoveries may bring forth new facts which will throw light on the period.

It is hazardous to fix a date for the period when the relation which existed between Babylonia and Assyria began. It was at one time thought to be about 1500 B.C. Until recently little was known of the early rulers and governors of Assyria. That the land was colonized from Babylonia, and was originally ruled as a dependency of that country, has been well known for a considerable time; but the early history of the country, the conditions under which the people lived, and the state of its capital, have become known within

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 34. See *The Religion of the Semites*, by W. R. Smith, p. 1 *et seq.*

very recent times. The history of Assyria as a dependent State or province of Babylon must be pushed back to a far more remote period than was supposed. And we should remember that the problem of Assyrian chronology is, for the earlier periods, far from being solved.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that at first the two Powers were friendly, but the growing strength of Assyria became a menace to Babylonia. About 1300 B.C. the Assyrian army attacked the city of Babylon, and the two Powers fought hard until about 1200 B.C., when Tiglath-pileser I. (1120-1100 B.C.), one of the most noted Kings of ancient times, conquered Babylonia. The overthrow of Babylonia was so complete that it became subject to the Assyrian Kings. "Babylonia must decrease, while its rival Assyria increases, until, after a long and sore struggle, the old land becomes for a time subject to the younger."<sup>2</sup> The whole country north of Syria and Mesopotamia, from Lake Van to the Mediterranean, Tiglath-pileser says he made "of one mouth"—that is, he made to give homage to himself.

Babylon was the civilizing Power. Assyria was weak in this; from its origin to its fall its chief characteristics were energy and love of military power. It

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of the Kings of Assyria*, by Budge and King, p. 1 *et seq.*; *Egypt and Western Asia in the Light of Recent Discoveries*, by King and Hall, p. 388 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 35.

sought to increase its power by constant warfare. The history of Assyria can be traced back to about 1800 B.C.

The history of Babylonia and Assyria may be regarded as one from the third period of Babylonian, and the second period of Assyrian history, from 1100 B.C. till the fall of Assyria, 606 B.C. During these five centuries the united Mesopotamian Empire enjoyed the highest prosperity. Assyria rose to be an all-embracing Power during this period. The Hittites were conquered, Phœnicia was overcome, and so was Israel, while Judah was independent only in name.

The culture of Babylon went to Assyria. The Babylonian temples were the models according to which the Assyrian temples were built. The literature of the sacred cities of the south that had been treasured in the archives of the sacred cities of Babylonia were copied by the scribes of Assyria, and stored in the palaces of the Kings. The capital of Assyria moved towards the north. During the reign of Ashurnasirpal, Calah became the capital, in 880 B.C., instead of Ashur. And, in the course of time, Calah gave way to Nineveh, which was the centre of the great Empire during the reign of Tiglath-pileser II. (800 B.C.). It was during the reign of Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.) that the height of the Assyrian power was reached. The King led his mighty army to the banks of the

Nile, and succeeded in obtaining a direct control over the affairs of Egypt.

Under Ashurbanipal, Nineveh became the centre, not only of military power, but of literature as well. The cuneiform literature of Babylonia is collected for the benefit of his people.

So far as religion is concerned, it came to an end when the second Babylonian Empire fell. The history of Babylonian and Assyrian religion extends from 4000 B.C. till about 550 B.C. And when we deal with the relation between the religion of Babylonia and Assyria and the religion of Israel, we must begin with Babylonia ; but to attain the object we have in view, we shall treat the religions of Babylonia and Assyria as one.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RELIGIOUS LITERATURE OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE best guide we have to the religious creeds of the people of antiquity is to be found in their national literature. The origin of Babylonian literature is enveloped in darkness. We can state for certain that it dates prior to the age of Hammurabi, but beyond that everything is a question of conjecture. Ur, Sippur, Agade, Eridu, Nippur, Uruk, and, it may be, Lagash, and later on Babylon, were the great centres of political and religious thought and activity. It was in Babylonia literature had its birth. It sprang up in those cities where commerce saw the light.

One peculiar characteristic worthy of note about all the Babylonian literature is its religious nature. In this the religion of the Hebrew people is very similar. The legal phrases inscribed on such hard and cold material as the contract tablets have a religious colour. It is like the Blue book having a religious atmosphere. There was a reason for this. The scribes were priests,

and every kind of contract between parties was a religious agreement. In political, business, and legal matters an invocation or an appeal to the gods was involved. What we term secular was religious to the Babylonians, and even science was clothed in a religious garb. It was believed that the stars had power to shape and influence man's destiny. Medicine, again, was in the hands of the priests. It was a Babylonian belief that disease was caused by a direct presence in the body of a divine infliction, or that it was present on account of the influence of some pernicious spirit hiding there. Magic of various kinds was resorted to as a cure. The Babylonians and the peoples of antiquity, including the Jews, attributed diseases to some supernatural agencies; but we attribute them to-day to some natural causes, to be cured by natural means. The result was that the Babylonians, though somewhat advanced in the knowledge of medicine, always associated the medicinal remedies with an appeal to the gods.

The inscriptions show clearly that the historical literature of the Babylonians was produced by the religious leaders of the nation, under the command of the rulers, who were anxious to express their deep sense of dependence upon the gods of the land; and this was made the basis of the authority which the rulers exercised over the people, so that no line of distinction was drawn between the religious and the secular in the



life of the Babylonians and Assyrians, and the same is true of the Jews.

What may be termed the religious literature in the strict sense of the word may be divided into five classes, according to Professor Jastrow's divisions :

1. The magical texts.
2. The hymns and prayers.
3. Omens and forecasts.
4. The cosmology.
5. Epics and legends.

The first three groups have a practical significance, while the last two are distinguished more by a distinctly literary character. The first three groups—the magical texts, hymns and prayers, omens and forecasts—were produced as occasions demanded, and there was ample reason why they should be written, and that at an early age. The incantations which had been effective in securing a control over the spirit would naturally become popular, and would be kept for the service of generations yet to come, and these would naturally be connected with some temple or other. Rituals grew in this manner.

The rituals of various temples once being fixed, the impulse to literary composition would still go on in an age marked by mental activity. The practical purpose would be followed by the love of literary excellency. The connection with, and attachment to,

particular sacred edifices or certain gods would inspire earnest and gifted priests to further efforts. This is clearly seen in the story of Creation, the epics and legends that form the second half of the religious productions of Babylonia.

*The Religious Literature of the Old Testament.*—Some are still of opinion that we possess in the Book of Genesis the oldest tradition of the origin of the world, the creation of man, and the beginning of the human race. On the other hand, many scholars contend that the Old Testament contains practically nothing that is original. According to this view, Israel must not be regarded as holding a unique position amongst the nations of the world in that remote age; nor can it be affirmed that traditions that resemble those of Israel were borrowed from the Old Testament; and the difference can be accounted for by assuming their deterioration in the process of being handed down to the succeeding generations. Politically, Israel did not stand aloof from her neighbours, but was influenced by them. Egypt and Babylonia and Assyria influenced the culture and politics of Israel; and in the same way the religious views of the Jewish people were influenced by Babylonia and Assyria. In the sphere of religion, as in that of politics, influences came pouring in from all sides on the people who settled in Palestine. It did not remain unaffected by the spiritual possessions of the Canaanites, into whose country it had forced its

way and established itself. Very lively exchange of ideas must have occurred amongst the people of antiquity, and Israel was powerfully affected by them. It is too late in the day to maintain that the Israelitish religion had no points of contact with the religious beliefs of its neighbours, but to define exactly the nature of the relation is not quite easy.

The narratives in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis have always played a very prominent part in the religion of Israel—the story of the Creation of the world, and the Creation and the Fall of man.

It is within the scope of our task to point out the elements which are common to the religion of both Babylonia-Assyria and the Old Testament. It is a very striking fact that the narrative in the Book of Genesis resembles the Babylonian tradition.

## CHAPTER IV

### CREATION

THE story of the Creation of the universe is in the Book of Genesis (i. to ii. 4<sup>a</sup>). Theologians have taught, and religious people have believed, that the above narrative is a true picture of the order of Creation. Though the religious conception of God creating the world is very high, still, the story cannot stand the light that astronomy and geology have shed upon it. The facts recorded by both sciences are at variance with the narrative in the Book of Genesis. Astronomy and geology caused serious doubts in the minds of scholars as to the accuracy of the supposed facts before archæology entered the field. Archæological research in Babylonia and Assyria has brought to light the source whence the story of Creation sprang.

The progress made in this branch of science was very insignificant before the year 1835. In that year Major Henry Rawlinson began to draw copies of three inscriptions on Mount Behistun, near Rermansha, Persia.

In 1842 Botta began to dig the mounds of Monsul ;

in 1849 Mr. Henry Layard began to explore in Nineveh, and while there it dawned upon him that some of the narratives in the Book of Genésis were brought from Babylonia. This problem was definitely settled in 1872, when the late Mr. George Smith declared that he had discovered on the tablets a narrative that would throw light on the story of the Deluge. In the year 1876 he published in his book entitled *Chaldean Genesis* all the inscriptions that had been discovered and translated. Though the Babylonian story of Creation is fragmentary, yet it is complete enough to convince the intelligent and unprejudiced mind that a very intimate relation existed between the story of Creation in the Old Testament and the story of Creation in Babylonian and Assyrian literature.

Fragments of the long epic poem embodied certain of the conceptions and beliefs current in Babylonia and Assyria regarding the way in which the universe came into existence. It is evident that there were other conceptions and legends concerning the origin of all things, because there is another story of the Creation which differs entirely from that of the epic. The epic, according to Professor Sayce's view, belongs to a late date.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Jastrow is very interesting in this connection: "Various traditions were current in Babylonia regarding the manner in which the universe came into

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on *The Religion of the Ancient Babylonians*, p. 385.

existence. The labours of the theologians to systematize these traditions did not succeed in bringing about their unification. Somewhat like in the Book of Genesis, where two versions of the Creation story have been combined by some editor, so portions of what were clearly two independent versions have been found among the remains of Babylonian literature. But whereas in the Old Testament the two versions are presented in combination so as to form a harmonic whole, the two Babylonian versions continued to exist side by side. There is no reason to suppose that the versions were limited to two; in fact, a variant to an important episode in the Creation story has been discovered which points to a third version."<sup>1</sup>

How to explain these different traditions? The most probable explanation is that the different traditions arose in the different religious centres in the valley of the Euphrates.

There are seven tablets in the Babylonian "Epic of Creation," but many of them are very fragmentary. They were discovered in the library of Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.) at Kouyunjik (Nineveh). Of course it is well known that the library contained many transcripts of earlier texts. There can be no doubt that the contents of the tablets date back much farther

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 407. *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, by Driver, p. 6.

than 700 B.C. ; Professor Sayce is of opinion that they are as old as 2200 or 2300 B.C.

The question as to the date of the Creation legends is a very interesting one. The legends as expressed in the seven tablets are not exactly the same as they were in their more primitive form, and so the date which is assigned to the one cannot be assigned to the other. The tablets of the Creation story which were written for the library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh in 700 B.C. were not composed in Assyria in that century. There are clear traces that the legends had undergone transformation before this period. Ashurbanipal was the King of Assyria, and Ashur was the national god of the country. The Creation legends do not glorify Ashur, but Marduk, the god of Babylon, which points out clearly that the scribes made copies of older tablets of Babylonian origin to be placed in the library of their master, Ashurbanipal. To assign an earlier date to the seven tablets is only a matter of conjecture, but it may be fixed with a certain degree of probability. The sources at our disposal are only indirect evidence, and we can get at an approximate date by considering the age of Babylonian legends in general, and of the Creation legends in particular.<sup>1</sup>

The Creation legends furnish internal evidence which presupposes a long period—in fact, many cen-

<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, by L. W. King, vol. i., pp. lxxii *et seq.*

turies—"of tradition, during which the legends, though derived probably from common originals, were handed down independently of one another."

The fight between Marduk and Tiāmat has been found upon two limestone slabs in the temple of Ninib at Nimrūd. The temple was erected by Ashurnasirpal (884-860 B.C.). Here is a direct proof that the legend existed two hundred years before the erection of Ashurbanipal's library. And, again, the fight between Marduk and the monster Tiāmat is often found represented upon cylinder seals, the scene being in varied treatment, which implies variant forms of the legend, "and so indirectly furnishes evidence of the early origin of the legend itself."

"From an examination of the Babylonian historical inscriptions, which record the setting-up of statues and the making of temple furniture, we are enabled to trace back the existence of the Creation legends to still earlier periods."

"Among the tablets found at Tel-el-Amarna, which date from the fifteenth century B.C., were fragments of copies of two Babylonian legends—the one containing the story of Nergal and Ereshkigal, and the other inscribed with a part of the legend of Adapa and the South Wind. . . . Fragments of legends have also been recently found in Babylonia which date from the end of the period of the First Dynasty of Babylon, about 2100 B.C. ; and the resemblance which these documents



bear to certain legends previously known from Assyrian copies only is not only of a general nature, but extends even to identity of language. Thus, one of the recovered fragments is in part a duplicate of the so-called 'Cuthæan Legend of Creation'; two others contain phrases found upon the legend of Ea and Atarhasis, while upon one of them are traces of a new version of the Deluge story."

Three fragments of Babylonian legends which date from an earlier period have been discovered—from the time of the Kings of the Second Dynasty of Ur, before 2200 B.C. "These and a few other fragments show that early Semitic, as opposed to Sumerian, legends were in existence, and were carefully preserved and studied in other cities of Mesopotamia than Babylon, and at a period before the rise of that city to a position of importance under the Kings of the First Dynasty."

"The evidence furnished by these recently discovered tablets with regard to the date of Babylonian legends in general may be applied to the date of the Creation legends. While the origin of much of the Creation legends may be traced to Sumerian sources, it is clear that the Semitic inhabitants of Mesopotamia at a very early period produced their own versions of the compositions which they borrowed, modifying and augmenting them to suit their own legends and beliefs. . . . It is possible that the division of the poem into seven sections, inscribed upon separate tablets, took place at a

later period" (than the First Dynasty, when we may expect to find copies of the Creation legends corresponding to the legends mentioned above); "but be this as it may, we may conclude, with a considerable degree of confidence, that the bulk of the poem, as we know it from late Assyrian and neo-Babylonian copies, was composed at a period not later than 2000 B.C."<sup>1</sup>

Only forty lines remain of one tradition; of the other six tablets have been found. There is uncertainty as to two pieces, whether they belong to the same tradition or represent a third tradition, as does a fragment including a different account of the episode contained in the fourth tablet of the larger group. The tablets, containing in all twenty-three fragments, give a fairly complete description of the Babylonian story of Creation, and with the assistance of other tablets containing astronomical, historical, and religious texts, and with the aid of allusions in classical writers such as Berossus—a Babylonian priest, who lived about 300 B.C., and compiled a Babylonian history, and Damascius—another author of antiquity, who lived A.D. 600 (the historical accuracy of these authors, with the exception of certain textual corruptions which are inseparable from works of the kind, have been completely established by the inscriptions on the tablets).

<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, by L. W. King, vol. i., p. lxxix *et seq.*

So that what is deficient in the tablets can be fairly well filled in this manner.

The longer tradition is the chief source for the Babylonian story of Creation. The inscriptions are written in the rhythmical form, and the series is, in fact, a grand hymn, or a kind of epic poem in honour of Marduk (Merodach, Jer. i. 2). He was the supreme god of Babylon. The cosmology, the beginning of things and the order of Creation, is only secondary, only incidental; the chief object is to glorify Marduk, the head of the Babylonian pantheon. It pictures the great god of Babylon in severe conflict with the powers of darkness and chaos—how Marduk subjected all things under his feet, and succeeded in creating a world of order and light. The primeval chaos is personified in Tiāmat. Tiāmat corresponds with the Hebrew word *tehom*, the “deep” (Gen. i. 2). This episode describes Marduk’s victory over Tiāmat, the primeval water chaos, and the overshadowing power of Marduk’s personality. The glorification of Marduk being the main theme, implies that Babylon was the city where the early traditions obtained their literary expression. Strictly speaking, it is more accurate to call the poem “The Epic of Marduk” than “The Creation Epic.” To Marduk the heavenly bodies owe their existence. Order and light had their origin in him. He takes to himself functions which at one time belonged to the other gods. Bel and Ea willingly

acknowledge the superiority of Marduk; Anu and the other great deities pay homage to him. The early Babylonian traditions were more or less changed in the attempt to praise Marduk; and this colouring was made by the theologians. Marduk's position was established in the popular beliefs before the theologians began to execute the transformation in the popular traditions. Marduk was among the latest of the gods to emerge into prominence, so that the changes wrought in the epic of Marduk were comparatively late—some centuries later than Hammurabi, who reigned somewhere between 2400 and 2000 B.C. (according to L. W. King, 1900 B.C.).

That "The Epic of Creation" is imperfect is accounted for by the fact that the main purpose of the series is to glorify Marduk; and to account for the successive stages in the Creation of the universe is only secondary. The general points are touched upon, and nothing more. To quote Professor Jastrow: "Many details are omitted which in a cosmological epic, composed for the specific purpose of setting forth the order of Creation, would hardly have been wanting. In this respect, the Babylonian version again resembles the Biblical account of Creation, which is similarly marked by its brevity, and it is as significant for its omissions as for what it contains."<sup>1</sup>

As to the form in which it is expressed: Each line is

<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, by L. W. King., vol. i., p. 409.

composed of two divisions, and, as a rule, four or eight lines make a stanza. The principle of parallelism is introduced, though not consistently carried out. So the literary form of "The Epic of Creation," or "The Epic of Marduk," evinces great care, not only by its metrical form, but by its poetic diction as well. The form of parallelism is a characteristic of both Babylonian and Hebrew poetry.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TABLETS OF CREATION

WE will endeavour to give a summary of the Babylonian cosmology that throws light on the story of Creation given in the Book of Genesis, and then we will try to point out the similarity and the difference between Babylonian tradition and the Old Testament story, and, finally, draw our conclusion regarding the relation between the Babylonian and Biblical accounts of Creation.

*The first tablet*, of which only a portion is preserved:<sup>1</sup>

“ When above heaven existed not,  
When earth below had yet no being ;  
Apsu was there from the first, the source of both (heaven  
and earth),  
The raging Tiāmat the mother of both,  
But their waters<sup>2</sup> were gathered together in a mass,

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<sup>1</sup> A translation may be found in *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, by L. W. King ; *Light from the East*, by C. J. Ball ; *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, by T. G. Pinches ; *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by M. Jastrow ; *Records of the Past*, New Series, by A. H. Sayce ; *Creation*, by Zimmern, in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* ; *The Monist*, April and July, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Apsu and Tiāmat.

No field was marked off, no soil<sup>1</sup> was seen.  
 When none of the gods was as yet produced,  
 No name mentioned, no fate determined,  
 Then were created the gods in their totality :  
 Lakhmu and Lakhamu were created.  
 Days went by,<sup>2</sup>  
 Anshar and Kishnar were created ;  
 Many days elapsed,<sup>2</sup>  
 Anu [Bel and Ea were created],<sup>3</sup>  
 Anshar, and Anu,  
 And the god Anu,  
 Ea, whom his fathers, [his] begetters."

Here the portion breaks off. We perceive in this narrative the Babylonian gods gradually come into existence. Tiāmat, or the Deep, stands for chaos and disorder. Apsu is associated with Tiāmat. Apsu is the personified great Ocean—the "Deep" that covers everything. Apsu and Tiāmat are really synonymous. Why should the two be combined? Professor Jastrow holds the view that it is the introduction of the theological doctrine—*i.e.*, the association of the male and female element in everything connected with activity or with the life of the universe. Sex plays a very conspicuous part in life, and so Apsu and Tiāmat were personifications of this principle in the beginning.

To the popular imagination, Tiāmat was a huge monster. Tehōm in Hebrew is the same as the Baby-

<sup>1</sup> The term may mean "reed" or "marsh."

<sup>2</sup> Delitzsch renders a parallel phrase like "periods elapsed."

<sup>3</sup> Inserted from Damascius' extract of the work of Berossus on *Babylonia*.

lonian Tiāmat (Babylonia *tiamtu*, *tiamat*). Dillman says of Tehōm that it is formally and substantially the same as Tiāmat.<sup>1</sup> We hear some echoes of the same ideas in the imaginary portions of the Old and New Testament. Rahab, Leviathan, and the Dragon of apocalyptic visions belong to the same class. "All these monsters represent a popular attempt to picture the chaotic condition that prevailed before the great gods obtained control and established the order of heavenly and terrestrial phenomena." Assyriologists account for the belief that water was the origin of the universe by the fact that the valley of the Euphrates, flooded by the heavy rains and looking like a sea, suggested it. At the approach of spring, after the winter rains, clouds and floods having now disappeared, the dry land and vegetation appear. The Babylonians believed that they saw in the Babylonian valley during the winter and the spring a picture of what must have taken place in the first spring after a strenuous and deadly fight between Marduk and the monster Tiāmat, when the created universe came into being.<sup>2</sup>

The succeeding portion of the first tablet pictures how Apsu's tranquillity was disturbed when he found that other gods had entered his domain—a very human experience, surely! Being jealous of his rights, Apsu

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, English translation, vol. i., p. 58; *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, pp. 411, 412.

<sup>2</sup> "Creation" in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, sec. 4.



persuaded Tiāmat to join him in fighting for the supremacy. But Ea subdued Apsu, and Tiāmat was left to carry on the struggle single-handed, but succeeded in obtaining a brood of strange and hideous creatures, who fought on her side in battle.

Apsu declares (line 38) :

“Their way shall be destroyed  
And a cry of woe shall be made.”

Tiāmat says (line 50) :

“Let their way be made hard.”

Line 55 *et seq.*, we read :

“Ocean [rejoiced] at her ;<sup>1</sup> his face became bright :  
Evil they plotted against the [great] gods.”

*The Second Tablet.*—The inscriptions contained in the second tablet are imperfect. There are a few complete lines and a few fragments. The subsequent tablets throw light on the second, and so its contents can be determined to a considerable extent. The first portion of the second tablet must have contained Anshar's call to arms against Tiāmat, which is first sent to Anu and Ea. Both refuse. Then Anshar described Tiāmat's rebellion to Marduk. It is the same description as the last portion of the first tablet :<sup>2</sup>

“Tiāmat our mother rebelled against us ;  
A band she collected, wrathfully raging.”

<sup>1</sup> Tiāmat.

<sup>2</sup> *The Monist*, by the editor, April, 1901.

*The Third Tablet.*—Anshar speaks, sends Gaga to Lakhmu and Lakhamu, to inform them that Tīāmat is preparing for a conflict, and that she has a hideous brood to fight on her side ; that Anu and Ea had been invited to fight against them, but had refused. It proposes a banquet of the gods, at which they shall be asked to resign their prerogatives in favour of Marduk. The banquet is held, and succeeds.

*The Fourth Tablet.*—The fourth tablet is almost perfect. The 146 lines have been preserved almost entirely.

Marduk is exalted above the gods. Marduk spoke, and it was done. To demonstrate Marduk's power, the gods give him a sign, and he performs a miracle. A garment is laid down in the midst of the gods.

“Command that the dress disappear !  
Then command that the dress return !”

Marduk performs the task successfully.

“As he gave the command the dress disappeared.  
He spoke again and the dress was there.”

This “sign” reminds us of Jehovah's signs to His servant Moses as a proof of His power (Exod. iv. 2-8), and it is to be regarded as indicating that destruction and creation are in Marduk's power. The gods rejoice at this unmistakable exhibition of Marduk's strength. With one voice they frantically exclaim, “Marduk is King !” The insignia of royalty—

throne, sceptre, and authority—are conferred upon him.

“ Now go against Tiāmat ; cut off her life ;  
Let the winds carry her blood to hidden regions.”<sup>1</sup>

Then Marduk equips himself for the battle. The weapons form a strange variety—bow and quiver, and the lance and club, the storm and the lightning-flash. Then Marduk proceeds and captures Tiāmat in a huge net : <sup>2</sup>

“ Constructs a net wherewith to enclose the life of Tiāmat.  
The four winds he grasped so that she could not escape.  
The south and the north winds, the east and the west winds,  
He brought to the net, which was the gift of his father Anu.”

To complete the outfit,

“ He creates a destructive wind, a storm, a hurricane,  
Making of the four winds seven<sup>3</sup> destructive and fatal ones ;  
Then he let loose the winds he created, the seven ;  
To destroy the life of Tiāmat, they followed after him.”

Marduk, having the most powerful weapon in his hand, mounts his chariot, which is driven by fiery steeds. He makes straight for the hostile camp. The sight of him imparts terror on all sides.

“ The lord comes nearer with his eye fixed upon Tiāmat,  
Piercing with his glance (?) Kingu her consort.”

Kingu starts back in alarm. He cannot endure the majestic halo which surrounds Marduk. Kingu's

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, pp. 424, 425.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 426.

<sup>3</sup> Adding three to the ordinary winds from the four directions.



associates—the monsters—are terrified at their leader's discomfiture. Tiāmat alone does not lose her courage.

Marduk, brandishing his great weapon, addresses Tiāmat. He reproaches her for the hatred she has shown towards the gods, and fearlessly calls her out to the combat.

“Stand up ! I and thou, come, let us fight.”

Tiāmat's anger at the challenge of Marduk is finely pictured :

“When Tiāmat heard these words,  
She acted as possessed, her senses left her :  
Tiāmat shrieked wild and loud,  
Trembling and shaking down to her foundations ;  
She pronounced an incantation, uttered her sacred formula.”

Marduk is undismayed.

“Then Tiāmat and Marduk, chief of the gods, advanced towards one another ;

They advanced to the contest, drew nigh for fight.”

The fight between the two is described vividly, and then—

“He cleft her like a flat [?] fish into two parts ;  
The one half of her he set up, and made a covering for the heaven,  
Set a bar before it, stationed a guard,  
Commanded them not to let its waters issue forth.  
He marched through the heaven, surveyed the regions thereof,  
Stood in front of the abyss, the abode of the god Ea.  
Then Bel<sup>1</sup> measured the structure of the abyss,  
A great house, a copy of it, he founded E-sharra ;  
The great house E-sharra, which he built as the heaven,  
He made Anu, Bel, Ea, to inhabit as their city.”

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<sup>1</sup> A title of Marduk. *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 428.

"It is evident that the canopy of heaven is meant. Such is the enormous size of Tiāmat that one-half of her body, flattened out so as to serve as a curtain, is stretched 'across the heavens to keep the 'upper waters'—'the waters above the firmament,' as the Book of Genesis puts it—from coming down." The "abyss" was the immense waters on which the earth was believed to rest. "E-sharra is a poetical designation of the earth, and signifies, as Jensen has satisfactorily shown, 'house of fullness,' or 'home of fertility.' To the Babylonians the earth was a hollow hemisphere, similar in appearance to the vault of heaven, but placed beneath it (with its convex side upwards), and supported upon the abyss of waters underneath."<sup>1</sup>

*The Fifth Tablet.*—The fifth tablet describes the creation of the sun and moon, the institution of the year, with its twelve months. There are only fragments of this tablet.

"He formed a station of the great gods ;  
 Stars like unto themselves, he fixed the signs of the zodiac ;  
 He appointed the year, dividing it into seasons ;  
 The twelve months—three stars for each he stationed,  
 From the day when the year sets out unto the end thereof.  
 He founded fast the station of Nibir [Jupiter] to determine their  
     limits,  
 That none [of the days] might err, none make a mistake.  
 The station of Bel and Ea he fixed by his side,  
 Then opened the great doors [*i.e.*, in heaven] on both sides ;

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<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 431.

The barrier he made strong to left and right.

[One line omitted]

He caused the moon god to shine forth, made him overseer of night ;

He appointed him, a being of night, to determine days."<sup>1</sup>

In the first lines of the seventh tablet Marduk is described as the "bestower of planting," the creator of grain and plants, who caused the green herb to spring up. The Epic mentioned probably the creation of vegetation, and it is equally probable that this was the substance of the lost fragments of the fifth tablet.<sup>2</sup>

*The Sixth Tablet.*—The opening and closing lines of the sixth tablet have been recovered, and it describes the creation of man.

"When Marduk heard the word of the gods,

His heart prompted him and he devised [a cunning plan].

He opened his mouth, and unto Ea [he spake],

[That which] he had conceived in his heart he imparted [unto him]

'My blood will I take, and bone will I [fashion].

I will make man, that man may. . . .

I will create man who shall inhabit [the earth?]

That the service of the gods may be established, and that [their] shrines [may be built].'"

*The Seventh Tablet.*—The seventh tablet is a poem addressed by the gods to Marduk. It describes and celebrates his deeds and character—he is all-powerful, beneficent, compassionate, and just. Marduk absorbs the excellences of all the gods.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Light from the East*, by Ball, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, by King, pp. l, lvi, lvii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. lxiii *et seq.*, lxxxix.

“God of pure life, they called [him] in the third place, the bearer of purification,  
 God of favourable wind,<sup>1</sup> lord of response<sup>2</sup> and of mercy,  
 Creator of abundance and fullness, granter of blessings,  
 Who increases the things that were small,  
 Whose favourable wind we experienced in sore distress,  
 Thus let them<sup>3</sup> speak and glorify and be obedient to him.”

The gods recall with gratitude Marduk's triumph over Tīāmat, his humane treatment of Tīāmat's associates.

“Mankind is exhorted not to forget Marduk,  
 Who created mankind out of kindness towards them,  
 The merciful one, with whom is the power of giving life.  
 May his deeds remain and never be forgotten  
 By humanity, created by his hands.”<sup>4</sup>

Marduk is the one who knows the heart of the gods,  
 “who gathers the gods together,” “who rules in truth and justice.”

We come now to the resemblances and the differences between the Babylonian cosmogony and the story of Creation in the Old Testament, and the connection that exists between the Babylonian and Biblical accounts of Creation.

## I.

We will note first of all the resemblances.

The general outline of both is very similar. Both accounts are short, and what is omitted is as striking as the contents.

<sup>1</sup> A standing phrase for favour in general.

<sup>2</sup> To prayer.

<sup>3</sup> The gods.

<sup>4</sup> *Religion of Babylon and Assyria*, p. 438.

A "watery chaos" is presupposed "in the beginning"; above it the darkness, "while the earth was without form and void."

In both the creation of the universe begins with the creation of light. The powers of darkness had to be cleared by the gods of light before the Babylonian god could begin his work, and the heaven and the earth came forth.

According to both traditions, a firmament divides the abyss of waters—the waters above from the waters beneath. The creation of the heavens and earth takes place before the appointment of the heavenly bodies as measures of time.

And the creation of man is the crowning act of the creator. "The Epic of Creation," being divided into seven tablets, suggests a correspondence with the seven days in the Book of Genesis.

## II.

The differences are very striking. The recurring formulæ, as well as the methodical division into days, each with its particular creative acts, in the Book of Genesis are not on the tablets. The Babylonian stages of Creation are not obvious, and they appear to differ from the order in Genesis; there the heavenly bodies seem to have preceded the dry land.

In "The Epic of Creation" there are many gods—



polytheism, demons, and monsters—whereas in Genesis there is but one God.

The mythical features of the Babylonian Epic have been carefully sifted, and can only be traced in a few sentences.

In the Epic chaos precedes god ; in Genesis God is before everything.

The Babylonian gods were either created or produced—we know not how or when ; it was with gradual and great effort they succeeded to ascend beyond the darkness and chaos that encompassed them. In Genesis God's supremacy is absolute, and His word final. It may be said that Marduk held a very similar position.

The Babylonian Epic throws light on the moral aspect of Marduk's character and the moral admonitions to the man who is newly created. Nothing is said in the Biblical account about the moral character of God, nor of His will to man.

### III.

What is the relation between the Babylonian "Epic of Creation" and the story of Creation in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis? Two stories that have such striking resemblances in ideas and literary expressions cannot be quite independent.

One fact is obvious : the great antiquity of "The Epic of Creation" on the tablets is beyond a doubt ; and it is

equally certain that the story of Creation as recorded in the Old Testament is of comparatively late date. So the Babylonian theologians could not have borrowed from Genesis.

The story in the Book of Genesis is so much better than the Babylonian tradition, which makes it very difficult to believe that the latter was elaborated from the former. It is more than probable that the unique majesty which is assigned to God in Genesis would be ascribed to Marduk, if the writer or writers had the first chapter of Genesis before them.

It has been maintained that the two accounts of Creation are independent growths from an old tradition which was current amongst the ancient Semitic ancestors of both Israelites and Babylonians.

Others, again, have asserted that the account we have in the Book of Genesis (i. to ii. <sup>4a</sup>) is an edition of the Babylonian "Epic of Creation," with its polytheistic beliefs excluded. According to the results of Biblical criticism, the first chapter of Genesis is taken, in all probability, from the priestly writings, and has been either composed by the priestly narrator or extracted by him and edited from the ancient traditions of which the priestly guild were the recognized keepers. It is maintained by some that the Priestly Document in the Hexateuch was composed in Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem, and that its authors might have had an access to such tablets as those of "The Epic of

Creation," or they might have heard some such traditions from their neighbours.

The objection to the first view is that the two narratives resemble each other too closely to be wholly independent ; and to the second, that the social, commercial, and political connections between Israel, Babylonia, and Assyria were too intimate for many centuries before the exile to support that view. The discovery of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets has established the fact that the influence of Babylonian civilization had extended over Western Asia, including Syria and Palestine, before 2000 B.C. The Babylonian was the language of diplomacy of Western Asia, and at a later period the States in the valley of the Euphrates regained their dominion over Palestine. From the time of Jehu until the captivity the kingdoms of Israel paid tribute to Babylon. It is almost impossible to believe that the Babylonian tradition was unknown to Israel before the exile—the fall of Jerusalem. It is more reasonable to believe that the Babylonian "Epic of Creation" was known in Canaan from a very early age, and was part of the folklore of the country, and at last of Israel. The religious ideas of Israel modified and developed the tradition, and Genesis (i. to ii. 4<sup>a</sup>) retains the form in which it was expressed during the exile from the authors of the Priestly Document.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Myth and Legend in the Sacred Books," in *The Old Testament Theology*, by Schultz, vol. i., p. 24 *et seq.* ; *Genesis*, by W. H. Bennett, p. 71.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN

THE account of the Creation and Fall of man is given in the Book of Genesis (ii. 4*b* to iii. 24). There is a difference between the two accounts of the Creation in Genesis, and it is evident that there were different traditions amongst the Israelites about the creation of the universe. In the second account (Gen. ii.) the creation of man precedes vegetation and animals. A similar tradition has been discovered on a very ancient tablet—3000 to 4000 B.C., according to Hommel.

This story of Creation is in two languages, Sumerian-Akkadian and Semitic-Babylonian. It does not record the conflict between Marduk and Tīāmat. It is simple and brief. The development of animal life and the development of civilization form a prominent part in this second version. It serves to fill to some extent the gaps in the first tradition, owing to the imperfect condition of the fifth tablet and the entire loss of the sixth.

It begins with the period when the universe was not yet in existence, but the period is specified in such a manner that one has a more definite conception of this ancient time.

According to this version, only water exists. Men and animals have not yet been created; land and houses have not come into existence; no gods have been created—and because there were no gods, there were no temples.

There was a disturbance in the sea: Babylon was built, with its temple, E-sagila. The gods were created—the Annunaki (the inferior deities). And then Marduk created men, animals, and the wild creatures of the desert. The Euphrates and the Tigris came to their places. There were created the verdure of the field, grass, marshes, reeds; the wild cow, with her young; the young wild ox; the ewe, with her young; the sheep of the fold; parks and forests; and, finally, houses and cities, and Nippur and Erech, with their temples.<sup>1</sup>

“The bright house of the gods was not yet built on the bright place;  
 No reed grew and no tree was formed,  
 No brick was laid, not any brick edifice<sup>2</sup> reared,  
 No house erected, no city built,  
 No city reared [Assyrian made], no animals crept about;  
 Nippur was not reared, E-kur<sup>3</sup> was not erected;  
 Erech was not reared, E-Anna<sup>4</sup> not erected;  
 The deep<sup>5</sup> not formed, Eridu<sup>6</sup> not reared;  
 The bright house, the house of the gods, not yet constructed as a dwelling.  
 The world was all a sea.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, by Driver, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Clay being the building material in Babylonia.

<sup>3</sup> Bel's temple at Nippur.

<sup>4</sup> Temple of Ishtar at Erech.

<sup>5</sup> Apsu.

<sup>6</sup> City sacred to Ea at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

<sup>7</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 445.

Then we have a somewhat vague picture of dry land :

“There was a channel within the sea.

At that time Eridu was erected, E-Sagila<sup>1</sup> was built,

E-Sagila in the midst of the ‘deep’ where the god of the glorious  
abode<sup>2</sup> dwells.”

Professor Jastrow states that “the mention of the channel appears to imply that the waters were permitted to flow off in a certain direction. The conception would then be similar to the view expressed in Genesis, where the dry land appears in consequence of the waters being ‘gathered’ into one place (Gen. i. 9).”<sup>3</sup>

With the erection of Eridu, a boundary was placed for the “deep,” and this place extended formed the dry land.

“Marduk constructed an enclosure around the waters ;  
He made dust and heaped it up within the enclosure.”

Marduk created mankind :

“Mankind he created.”

Aruru is connected with Marduk in the creation of the human race :

“The goddess Aruru created the seed of men together with him.”<sup>4</sup>

Marduk’s creative work is described further :

‘The animals of the field, the living creatures of the field, he created  
The Tigris and Euphrates he formed in their places, gave them  
good names ;

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<sup>1</sup> Ea’s temple in Eridu.

<sup>2</sup> Ea.

<sup>3</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 447.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

Soil [?], grass, the marsh, reed, and forest he created ;  
The verdure of the field he produced ;  
The lands, the marsh, the thicket,  
The wild cow with her young, the young wild ox,  
The ewe with her young, the sheep of the fold,  
Parks and forests,  
The goat and wild goat, he brought forth."

Houses are built and cities erected out of clay by Marduk :

" Houses he erected, cities he built,  
Cities he built, dwellings he prepared,  
Nippur he built, E-Kur he erected,  
Erech he built, E-Anna he erected."

Professor Jastrow sums this up as follows : " The new points derived from this second version are (a) the details of the creation of the animal and plant world, (b) the mention of Aruru as the mother of mankind, and (c) the inclusion of human culture in the story of the ' beginning.' " <sup>1</sup>

Professor Sayce is of opinion that the Babylonian Cosmogony had its origin in the city of Eridu, a primitive seaport of the country, where land was being continually formed, because clay, etc., were deposited.

Professor Hommel maintains that the chief purpose is not to give an account of the creation of mankind and animals, but to give an account of the first formation of civilization in Babylonia, and to show its Divine origin.

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 450.

The fragment recognized by Mr. W. L. King contains a description of the creation of man :

“ Marduk on hearing the word of the gods,  
 His heart urged him, and he made [cunning plans].  
 He opened his mouth and [said] to the god Ea  
 [What] he thought out in his heart he communicates  
 ‘ Let me gather my blood and let me . . . bone,  
 Let me set up a man, and let the man . . .  
 Let me make then men dwelling  
 May the service of the gods be established, and as for them  
 let . . .  
 Let me alter the ways of the gods, let me chan[ge their paths]—  
 As one let them be honoured, as two let them be . . .  
 Ea answered him, and the word he spake.’ ”

There remains a fragment of ten imperfect lines, which probably describes the consent of the other gods to Marduk's proposal, and was followed, probably, with a picture of the manner in which it was carried out.<sup>1</sup>

Eden is a Babylonian word, *Edinu*, which means plain or field “ applied especially to the great alluvial plain of Babylonia, watered by the Euphrates and Tigris.” So Eden is not a name for the garden itself, but for the region in which it lay.<sup>2</sup>

Onyx is the Hebrew word *Shōham*, and may be the *Sāmatu* of the Assyrians.<sup>3</sup>

Two of the rivers named in Genesis, into which the stream which arose in Eden was parted and became four

<sup>1</sup> *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, by Pinches, pp. 28, 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-72.

<sup>3</sup> *Authority and Archæology*, p. 19.



heads, are Babylonian—the Hiddekel (Ass. *Idiglat*, the Tigris) and the Perath (Ass. *Purat*, the Euphrates). Archæology has thrown no light on the other two rivers mentioned. Dr. Driver says of them: “And when we endeavour to identify the two remaining rivers, the Pishon and the Gihon by what we know of the countries which they are represented as flowing around, they elude our grasp.” The rivers were probably mistaken for the sea; if so, it betrays ignorance of the geography of the country.

There is a picture on an old Babylonian cylinder, deposited in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup> It depicts two figures seated on either side of a fruit-tree; both stretch their hands towards the tree, while behind one of them a serpent is coiling upwards, which vividly puts us in mind of the temptation and the fall in Gen. iii. Its meaning is doubtful, because no inscription accompanies it. Delitzsch<sup>2</sup> says: “The Bible contains that beautiful and profound story of the corruption of the woman by the serpent—again the serpent? There is certainly quite a Babylonian ring about it! Was it, perhaps, that serpent, the earliest enemy of the gods, seeking to revenge itself upon the gods of light by alienating from them their noblest creation? Or was it that serpent-god, of whom in one place it is said

<sup>1</sup> *Chaldean Genesis*, by Smith, p. 91; *Light from the East*, by Ball, p. 25; *Early Narratives of Genesis*, by H. E. Ryle, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Babel and Bible*, p. 55.

' he destroyed the abode of life ' ? The problem as to the origin of the Biblical story of the Fall is second to none in significance, in its bearings on the history of religion, and, above all, for New Testament theology, which, as is well known, sets off against the first Adam, through whom sin and death came into the world, the second Adam. Perhaps we may be permitted to lift the veil a little. May we point to an old Babylonian cylinder-seal ? Here in the middle is the tree with hanging fruit ; on the right the man, to be recognized by his horns, the symbol of strength, on the left the woman, both reaching out their hands to the fruit, and behind the woman the serpent. Should there not be a connection between this old Babylonian representation and the Biblical story of the Fall ? ”

There are striking resemblances and differences between the second tablet of Creation story and the account of the Creation and Fall of man in the Book of Genesis.

Adapa was the first man, according to the Babylonian tradition. The son of Ea was endowed with wisdom and knowledge. If Adapa was the son of Ea, why was he not immortal ? Adapa was deprived of immortality, not by disobedience, but through obedience to the god Ea.

Adam forfeited immortality through his ambition to be coequal with God—to know good and evil. He was sent out of the garden where grew the tree of life.

Anu is surprised that Ea should allow Adapa to appear in a place set apart for the gods.

“Why did Ea permit an impure mortal to see the interior of heaven and earth? He made him great and gave him fame.”<sup>1</sup>

Adapa having possessed the secrets of heaven and earth, the gods must now admit him to their circle.

The gods offer him food and water of life. Ea tells him that the food and water of death will be offered him; and Adapa refuses to eat and drink. So Ea prevents mankind gaining immortality.

Adam was sent out of the garden of Eden, according to the Biblical narrative, for this reason: “And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also the tree of life, and eat and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken” (Gen. iii. 22, 23).

While God is as anxious as Ea that man should not eat of the tree of life, God forewarned Adam, whereas Ea deceived Adapa, so as to keep him from eating.

The fact that food and drink constitutes eternal life according to the Babylonian tradition, and that the same expressions are used in the Old and New Testament, implies that there is a close connection between the two. There are other Biblical expressions which

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 550.

can be better understood in the light of the inscriptions. If "water of life" is not actually used in the narrative in Genesis, that is not an adequate reason for believing that there is no connection between them.

Adam, after the Fall, made a garment for himself.

Adapa, after acquiring knowledge of the "secrets of heaven and earth," is commanded by Ea to put on the garment that is offered him. These two incidents imply a close connection between the Babylonian tradition and the story in the Book of Genesis.

Another thing is very suggestive. God does not desire man to gain knowledge (Gen. iii. 5); Ea allows Adapa to know all the secrets in heaven and earth.

And so the weight of evidence points unmistakably to the conclusion that the story of the Creation and Fall of man had its origin in Babylonia.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SABBATH, THE CHERUBIM, AND THE DEVILS

THE Sabbath is probably of Babylonian origin.<sup>1</sup> The Babylonian word *Shabattum* means "day of rest of the heart." Where the same expression is used elsewhere it means a day when the gods rested from their anger, a day for the pacification of a god's wrath. According to a religious calendar for two months (Assyrian), the duties for the King are prescribed. The 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st, 28th, are entered as "favourable day" or "evil day"; it means that the day may become either, according to the nature of its observance. The other six days are regarded as favourable. On the days mentioned above certain observances must be strictly kept: "On the 7th day, supplication to Marduk and Sarpanitum, a favourable day (sc., may it be). An evil day. The shepherd of many nations is not to eat meat roasted by the fire, or any food prepared by the fire. The clothes of his body he is

<sup>1</sup> See "Sabbath" in *Hastings' B.D.; Encyclopædia Biblica; Religion of Egypt and Babylonia*, by Sayce, pp. 272, 476; *Expository Times*, November, 1906: *Statistics of Sabbath-keeping in Babylonia*, by C. H. W. Johns.

not to change, fine dress [?] he is not to put on. Sacrifices he is not to bring, nor is the King to ride in his chariot. He is not to hold court, nor is the priest to seek an oracle for him in the holy of holies.<sup>1</sup> The physician is not to be brought to the sick-room.<sup>2</sup> The day is not suitable for invoking curses.<sup>3</sup> At night, in the presence of Marduk and Ishtar, the King is to bring his gift. Then he is to offer sacrifices, so that his prayer may be acceptable."

The comparison with the Biblical Sabbath naturally suggests itself. The choice of the 7th day and the others rests in both cases upon the lunar calendar. Another similarity common to both is the Babylonian "evil day," and the precautions prescribed in the Pentateuchal codes against kindling fires, against leaving one's home, against productive labour. These point, says Professor Jastrow, to the Hebrew Sabbath as having been at its origin an "inauspicious day," on which it was dangerous to show oneself, or to call the deity's attention to one's existence. Despite the attempts made to change this day to one of "joy" (Isa. lviii. 13), the Hebrew Sabbath continued to retain for a long time, as a trace of its origin, a rather severe and sombre aspect.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "place of secrecy." It refers to that portion of the temple where the gods sat enthroned.

<sup>2</sup> That is, of the palace.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.*, upon one's enemies.

<sup>4</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 376-378.

There is one difference between the Babylonian and Jewish observance of the Sabbath. According to the Hebrew rites, the observance of the Sabbath is binding upon high and low—everyone. In the Pentateuch the whole people is holy : among the Babylonians the King alone is holy ; and the King, by observing these restrictions, insures the welfare of his people. The gods cared little for individual piety in Babylonia and Assyria, but the deities kept a watchful and jealous eye on their earthly representative.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Driver says : “ The Sabbath, it is true, assumed a new character among the Hebrews ; it was divested of its heathen associations, and made subservient to ethical and religious ends : but it originated in Babylonia. If, however, this explanation of its origin be correct, then it is plain that in the Book of Genesis its sanctity is explained unhistorically, and antedated. Instead of the Sabbath, closing the week, being sacred, because God rested upon it after six days’ work of Creation, the work of Creation was distributed among six days, followed by a day of rest, because the week, ended by the Sabbath, already existed as an institution, and the writer wished to adjust artificially the work of Creation to it. In other words, the week determined the ‘ days ’ of Creation, not the days of Creation the week.”

<sup>1</sup> *Authority and Archaeology*, p. 18.

## THE CHERUBIM.

In the Book of Genesis (iii. 24) we read of Cherubim, but no description is given of them. A description of these heavenly beings is given in Ezek. i. In Babylonia the gods employed angels and messengers. Dr. Delitzsch maintains that the belief in Cherubim and Seraphim, and guardian angels attending on man, arose in Babylonia. A Babylonian monarch had at his disposal a host of messengers, to convey his commands into every country, and it was thought that the gods were not behind their earthly representatives in this matter, and that they must have multitudes of angels or messengers to serve them. The messengers were quite unique in appearance ; they had the intelligence of man, so were of human form, provided with wings, to take them through the air with the god's message to earth. They are likewise provided with keen eyes and the swift wings of the eagle, as their chief duty is to guard the approach to the god. They were endowed with strength — the unconquerable strength of the bull, or the awe-inspiring majesty of the lion. The messengers or angels of Babylonia and Assyria resemble the angels in Ezekiel's vision. Other representations of angels have been discovered, such as that from the palace of Ashurnasirpal, which has a very striking resemblance to our conception of these



heavenly beings which are sent to minister (Ps. xci. 11; Matt. iv. 11, xviii. 10).

This is a letter of consolation to the Queen-mother from Apla: "Mother of the King, my lady, be consoled [?]<sup>1</sup>! An angel of grace from Bel and Nebo goes with the King of the lands, my lord."

A message in the writing, addressed to Esarhaddon: "May the great gods appoint a guardian of health and life at the side of the King, my lord."

The words of Nabopolassar, the founder of the Chaldean kingdom: "To the lordship over the land and people Marduk called me. He sent a tutelary deity [Cherub] of grace to go at my side; in everything that I did, he made my work succeed."

### DEVILS.

Dr. Delitzsch is of opinion that the old Babylonian conception of Tiāmat, the primeval enemy of the gods, is preserved in the idea of Satan which appears several times in the later and latest books of the Old Testament, and invariably as man's enemy, and not as God's (Job i. *et seq.*; 1 Chron. xxi. 1; Zech. iii. 1 *et seq.*). These expressions owe their beginning to the Babylonian belief in demons, which also recognized an *ilu limmu*, or "evil god," and *gallu*, or "devil." Bas-reliefs entitled "The Conflict with the Dragon," were discovered on the walls of the Assyrian palaces, which

are centuries older than the opening chapters in the Book of Genesis, representing the conflict between the power of light and the power of darkness, which is resumed with each new day, with every spring as it begins anew.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Babel and Bible*, pp. 53, 62, 64, 120, 121, 122.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DELUGE

IN 1872 a Babylonian story of the Deluge was discovered by George Smith in the library of Ashurbanipal at Kouyunik. This story has the advantage of being almost complete. It forms an episode in the Babylonian national Epic, which describes the exploits of Gilgamesh, the King and hero of Uruk (the Erech of Gen. x. 10). Berossus had preserved a summary of the tradition of a flood, and according to his narrative Kronos warned Xisuthros, the tenth antediluvian King, that the human race would be destroyed by a flood, and bade him to build a great ship, where his family and friends would be safe. It is interesting to note that the accuracy of Berossus' narrative is confirmed by the cuneiform inscriptions.

The Chaldean story of the Deluge forms the eleventh book of the Chaldean Epic of Gilgamesh or Nimrod.

The story originated long before it found expression in the Epic, and is much older than 2200 B.C., the time when the Epic took its present form.

The contents of the Babylonian legend are as follows: Gilgamesh is suffering from a disease. He visits his

ancestor, Parnapishtim, who is noted for his wisdom and that is why he is called Atrahasis—*i.e.*, the very wise. Berossus calls him Xisuthros, which would be in its primal form Hasis-Atra. Gilgamesh experiences many adventures, and crosses the Waters of Death, before he succeeds to see Parnapishtim. The old man has a very youthful appearance, and being asked as to the reason Parnapishtim narrates the story of the Flood and how for his godliness his life had been preserved from destruction at the time of the Flood. The gods had at one time decided to destroy the city of Surippak by a flood, but Ea was anxious to preserve the life of Parnapishtim. The god did not venture to reveal the secrets of the gods and yet was eager to warn Parnapishtim of the impending doom. Ea, the god of wisdom devised wise counsel. He appeared to Parnapishtim in a dream while asleep in a reed-hut one night, and, addressing the reed-hut, he spoke as follows :<sup>1</sup>

“ Reed hut, Reed hut, Wall, Wall,  
 Reed hut, listen Wall, perceive,  
 O man of Shurippak, Son of Ubaratulu,  
 Frame a house, build a ship ;  
 Forsake your property, Consider your life,  
 Leave behind all possessions, save your life.  
 Bring up into the midst of the ship the seed of life of every sort.  
 As for the ship which thou shalt build,  
 Let its form be long ;  
 And its breadth and its height shall be of the same measure.  
 Upon the deep then launch it.”

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<sup>1</sup> See *The Monist*, by the Editor, April, 1901, p. 501.

Parnapishtim comprehends these kindly suggestions of Ea, and proceeds with his work accordingly. Lest his fellow-citizens become suspicious, he is advised to tell them that he was going down to the ocean to live with Ea because Bel was unfriendly to the deity of the earth, and he would influence Bel to bestow rich blessings upon the people.

Parnapishtim was seven days building the ark. It measured 120 cubits in height and 120 cubits in breadth, containing six stories each with nine cross partitions. It was covered with tar inside and out. When it was completed, Parnapishtim took all his possessions into the hold—silver and gold, and all kinds of seeds of living beings, his family, his servants, animals of the field, and also artificers of all sorts.

The Deluge came, and Parnapishtim entered the ship. It filled him with alarm. The description is impressive and forcible.

“This day’s break<sup>1</sup> Was I afraid of  
To see the daylight<sup>1</sup> I shuddered ;  
I entered the ship, I locked its door ;  
To the governor of the ship, To Puzur-Bel, to the sailor,  
I confided the ark, Together with all its contents.  
As soon as the first Glow of dawn appeared,  
Rose from the horizon A black cloud.  
Ramman<sup>2</sup> was thundering In the midst of it.  
Nebo and Marduk Were marching in front—  
Ninib came forth, Causing the storm to burst.

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<sup>1</sup> L. W. King translates “storm” for “day” and “daylight.”

<sup>2</sup> Rimmon : the storm god.

The Anunnaki<sup>1</sup>    Lifted up the torches,  
 By their sheen they illuminated the land.  
 Hadad's dust-whirl    Rose to the sky,  
 And the light of day    Was changed into night."

The destructive elements—thunder, lightning, storm, rain—are uncontrolled. Then the waters rose as in battle storm upon the people. How splendidly it is portrayed !

"Not one saw    His neighbour any longer.  
 No longer were recognized    The people from heaven above,  
 The gods become afraid    of the deluge,  
 They fled and rose up    to Anu's heaven."

The gods could not stand the awful terrors of the scene ; they cowered like dogs.

Ishtar, the lady of the gods, having consented to it, reproached herself, and cried like a woman in travail at the destruction of mankind. Annunaki shared in her lamentation :

"Ishtar groans like a woman in throes,  
 The lofty goddess cries with loud voice,  
 The world of old has become a mass of clay.  
 That I should have assented<sup>2</sup> to this evil among the gods !  
 That when I assented to this evil,  
 I was for the destruction of my own creatures<sup>3</sup>  
 What I created, where is it ?  
 Like so many fish, it<sup>4</sup> fills the sea."

The storm appears to have got beyond the control of the gods, and none but Bel approves of the widespread destruction that has been wrought.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The seven evil spirits of the Nether World.

<sup>2</sup> Spoken or ordered.

<sup>3</sup> My mankind.

<sup>4</sup> Mankind.

<sup>5</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 502.

“The gods, together with the Annunaki, wept with her.  
 The gods, in their depression, sat down to weep,  
 Pressed their lips together, were overwhelmed with grief [?].  
 The storm could no longer be quieted.  
 For six days and nights  
 Wind rainstorm, hurricane swept along;  
 When the seventh day arrived the storm began to moderate,  
 Which had waged a contest like a great host.  
 The sea quieted down, wind and rainstorm ceased.”

Parnapishtim describes the destruction :

“I looked down upon the sea, and made my voice resound,  
 But all the people had returned<sup>1</sup> to earth again  
 I opened the window, the light fell upon my cheek,  
 And bowed down, I sat and wept.  
 Tears flowed over my face,  
 I looked down upon the world—naught but sea.”

But soon the waters began to diminish and the land began to appear :

“After twelve double hours<sup>2</sup> an island appeared,  
 The ship approached the mountain Nisir.”

Nisir means “protection” or “salvation.” Berossus has Kordyaic Mountains.

“At this mountain, the mount Nisir, the boat stuck fast.”

The boat remains in this position for six days ; on the seventh day Parnapishtim wished to know whether the sea had abated enough for him to leave the ship.

<sup>1</sup> Turned to clay.

<sup>2</sup> An army's march of fourteen hours.

“When the seventh day came,  
I put out a dove and let her go  
The dove flew hither and thither;  
But there was no resting-place, and she came back.  
Then I put out a swallow and let her go;  
The swallow flew hither and thither,  
But there was no resting-place, and she came back.  
Then I put out a raven and let her go.  
The raven flew, saw the waters decrease,  
She approached, cawing and croaking, but returned no more.”

Parnapishtim left the ark, and offered a sacrifice of strong frankincense on the top of the mountain to allure the gods:

“The gods inhaled the odour,  
The gods inhaled the sweet odour,  
The gods crowded like flies around the sacrifice.”

There was a scene. Ishtar, the lady of the gods, appeared in their midst and swore that Bel, the originator of the Deluge, should have no share of the sacrifice. At the moment Bel enters, and vents his anger because the planned destruction was not complete. In anger he asks:

“Who is there that has escaped with his life?  
No one was to survive the destruction!”

Ninib tells the fact that Ea effected the rescue of Parnapishtim:

“Then opened Ea his mouth and spake,  
He said in answer to the hero Bel:  
‘Ho! Thou wisest of the gods, thou hero!  
How foolish wast thou to produce a deluge!’



Upon the sinner visit his sin  
Upon the vicious visit his vice,  
But show long-suffering and do not exterminate,  
Have patience and do not destroy all ! ”

Ea tells Bel that he might punish sinners in some other way :

“ Instead of bringing on a deluge,  
Let lions come and diminish mankind.<sup>1</sup>  
Instead of bringing on a deluge,  
Let tigers come and diminish mankind.  
Instead of bringing on a deluge,  
Let famine come and smite the land.  
Instead of bringing on a deluge,  
Let pestilence come and waste the land.”

Ea confessed that he was the indirect cause of saving Parnapishtim :

“ Not have I revealed the council of the great gods !  
To the very wise one I sent dreams, thus he heard of the council  
of the gods.”

Bel is reconciled, and is willing to render some help to the saved man.

There are two other texts of the Babylonian Deluge. The tablets are fragments, and in so far as they have been understood they seem to agree with the version found in Ashurbanipal's library, while the third version is supposed to be written at the time of Ammizaguga, about 2200 B.C., and it differs materially in details.

What was said of the striking resemblances between the Babylonian tradition of Creation and the story in

<sup>1</sup> Not destroy it entirely.

Genesis is equally marked in the Babylonian-Assyrian story of the Flood, which is parallel to that we read in Gen. vi. to ix. It is impossible to imagine that the two stories are quite unconnected. As a matter of fact the cuneiform inscriptions have disclosed a resemblance which points to no other conclusion than that the two are dependent.

Parnapishtim is the tenth in descent from the first man ; Noah is the tenth in descent from Adam.

The cause of the Flood in both stories is ascribed to the sins of mankind.

The purpose of the Deluge in both narratives was to punish sin.

The reason why Parnapishtim was saved was his piety. Noah was preserved for the same reason.

Parnapishtim was forewarned of what was to take place. Noah, too, had a vision of what was to happen.

Parnapishtim was instructed to build an ark, and received the plans and measurements. Noah was commanded to build an ark, and plans and measurements were given to him.

The seed of life of all kinds went with Parnapishtim into the ark. The same went with Noah.

The waters covered all the high mountains, and it is asserted that everything living was destroyed except the things that had found shelter in the ark. The same facts are narrated in both stories.

Parnapishtim sent forth three birds—the swallow, the

dove, and the raven—to find out if the Deluge had subsided from the earth. The dove turned back to the ark, the raven flew away. The dove is mentioned twice in the Book of Genesis.

After the Deluge had subsided Parnapishtim offered a sacrifice on the top of the mountain; so did Noah.

Bel blessed Parnapishtim, and promised that he would never again destroy the world by a flood. God made the same covenant with Noah.

Ishtar uplifted the rainbow in the firmament, which an ancient Babylonian hymn calls “the bow of the Deluge.” God made a covenant with Noah, and placed the bow in the cloud.

Dr. G. A. Smith says<sup>1</sup> “that the Babylonian stories were probably in existence at a very early date—about 3000 B.C. It throws no light upon the date of the story in Genesis. We are ignorant of the time at which the Hebrews received these stories; while in their Biblical form they exhibit so many differences from the Babylonian as to make it probable that the materials were used by the writers of the Pentateuchal documents only after long tradition within a Hebrew atmosphere.”

It is evident that the account of the Deluge in the Book of Genesis cannot be the original. The Babylonian-Assyrian version is much older. Its date must

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, pp. 61, 62.

be fixed in the remote past when Israel did not exist. It would be a great error to assert that the Biblical narrative of the Flood is only a copy of the tradition discovered on the tablets. The Israelitish spirit is breathed into the Israelitish tradition. Religious thought, like genius, is not self-sustaining, not self-fed. Genius, to become full-grown, must borrow from the sources of the past and present. Genius, like Socrates, is a citizen of the world. Shakespeare had to drink from many a well. And Wordsworth, Milton, and Tennyson went to green pastures and lay down by the still waters. Their genius needed light and stimulus which could only be derived from other men's resources. And what is true of genius is equally true of the religion of Israel.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CLASSIFYING OF THE NATIONS

THERE is in the Book of Genesis (x.) a table of the chief nations with whom the authors were acquainted. The nations named in the chapter are more or less closely related to each other. And the compiler wants to assign Israel its rightful place among the nations of antiquity. His ultimate object is to give an account of the history of the chosen people. He felt compelled to say something about the growth of other nations, to trace the origin of all back to a common source, and to show how Israel sprang from them. After making this clear he confines himself entirely to the descendants of Shem, and farther on to a special branch of the family of Terah, from which Abraham sprang.

The principle of the classification adopted by the compiler is not purely ethnological, in the strict sense of the word; the peoples or tribes implied in it as closely related by family ties are not so related at all. "The genealogical table is merely a picturesque conventional fashion of expressing geographical and political relationships, though the genealogies may have been understood literally by some readers. In the

case of such a set of geographical statistics a reader who thought he had further or more correct information would make additions or corrections in the margin, and some of these would afterwards be copied into the text. Hence we may expect to find here, not only extracts from the original sources and editorial matter, but also other additions and modifications (see verses 18, 19, 24)."<sup>1</sup>

The Canaanites had no blood-relation with the Egyptians (verse 6). The Hittites had no racial connection with the Canaanites (verse 15). Elam and the Assyrians were not connected by blood. So that other considerations than that of family relationship dominated the compiler.

All that can be said of Babylonian and Assyrian discoveries in this connection is that they contain numerous names of peoples and tribes which illustrate many of the names contained in this chart, but there is no foundation for the assumption that the names contained in this classification had their origin in Babylonia-Assyria.

Gomer is an Assyrian name Gimirrai, a race frequently mentioned by Esarhaddon (681-668 B.C.); he speaks of having defeated the Gimirrai. Ashurbanipal (668-625 B.C.) states that these people invaded Lydia in the days of Gugu, the famous King of Lydia (687-653 B.C.).

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, by Bennett, p. 159.

Madā has been discovered on the tablets, which is the same as Mādai, the Medes (verse 2). It is often mentioned from the time of Adad-nirari (812-783 B.C.).

Tubal and Meshech are the Tabali and Musku of the inscriptions. Tabali is mentioned first by Shalmaneser II. (860-825) ; Musku is mentioned by Tiglath-pileser I. (1100 B.C.).

Yāvān is the name by which the Greeks were known to Sargon (722-705 B.C.).

Cush (verse 6) are a people dwelling on the south of Egypt, and are the Kush or Kesh which are often mentioned in the Egyptian inscriptions. It is doubtful whether the name Cush of verse 8 is the same as the Cush of verses 6 and 7. The similarity of name may have misled the compiler.

Nimrod. Dr. Driver says : " Upon Nimrod (verse 8) archæology has at present thrown no light ; speculation has been busy with him ; and his name has not hitherto been found on the monuments. Nor does archæology know of any one name which it can connect, as verses 10, 11 connect Nimrod, both with the foundation of Babylonian civilization and with its extension to Nineveh. Babylon, as we know from a dynastic list discovered by Mr. T. G. Pinches in 1880 among the treasures of the British Museum, possessed a line of eleven Kings, of one of whom—Khammurabi—ruling 2376-2333 B.C. ; and the contract tablets from this period . . . which relate to the sales, loans, the letting

of houses, fields and gardens, adoption, marriage, inheritance, etc., show that society was already highly organized, and that legal formalities were habitually observed."

Erech (Gen. x. 10). It is named as a city of Nimrod's kingdom (now Warka). It was the capital of a mighty King, Lugal-zaggisi, whose inscriptions have been discovered, and whose rule was stated to have reached as far as the Mediterranean Sea, and that before 4000 B.C.

Nineveh is first mentioned about 1800 B.C., when under the rule of priest-kings. The earliest Assyrian King known to us lived about 1450 B.C.

Calah (verse 12) was built by Shalmaneser I. about 1300 B.C.

"The oldest capital of Assyria was, however, neither Nineveh nor Calah, but a city called Asshur about sixty miles south of Nineveh, on the west bank of the Tigris (now Kal'at-sherkat); this, though not mentioned in Gen. x. 11, is often named in the inscriptions of the Assyrian Kings, and was not permanently superseded by Nineveh till the ninth century B.C. In the light of these facts it becomes impossible to place the beginnings of imperial power at Babylon and Nineveh within the lifetime of a single man. But the two broad facts which Gen. x. 10, 11 express—namely, that Babylon was an older seat of civilization than Nineveh, and that Nineveh was, as we might say, a younger



colony, sprung from it—are unquestionably correct : not only did Assyria acquire political importance much later than Babylon, but, as the monuments also show, it was, moreover, dependent socially and materially upon the older state.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Authority and Archæology*, p. 30.

## CHAPTER X

### THE INSCRIPTIONS AND CHRONOLOGY <sup>1</sup>

EXCAVATIONS were carried out in Niffer in 1887, under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania. Niffer was a mound situated to the south-east of Babylon, on a branch of the Euphrates. After two years' successful excavations a great temple dedicated to the god Bel was discovered. The archives of the temple Ekur were well stocked with the official legal documents, dating chiefly from 1700 to 1200 B.C., when the city was at the height of its glory.

It should be remembered that our present knowledge of the history of Babylonia dates back to about 4000 B.C. For the period extending from about 4000 to 2300 B.C. the chronology is uncertain.<sup>2</sup>

"Of the struggles and campaigns of the earlier Kings of the First Dynasty of Babylon we know little, for, although we possess a considerable number of legal and commercial documents of the period, we have recovered no strictly historical inscriptions. Our main

<sup>1</sup> See Gen. iv. 17-24, v. 1-32, xi. 10-32.

<sup>2</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 36.

source of information is the dates upon these documents, which are not dated by the years of the reigning King, but on a system adopted by the early Babylonian Kings from their Sumerian predecessors. In the latter periods of Babylonian history tablets were dated in the year of the King who was reigning at the time the document was drawn up, but this simple system had not been adopted at this early period. In place of this we find that each year was cited by the event of greatest importance which occurred in that year. This event might be the cutting of a canal, when the year in which this took place might be referred to as 'the year in which the canal named Ai-khegallu was cut'; or it might be the building of a temple, as in the date-formula, 'the year in which the great temple of the Moon-god was built'; or it might be the conquest of a city, such as 'the year in which the city of Kish was destroyed.' Now it will be obvious that this system of dating had many disadvantages. An event might be of great importance for one city, while it might never have been heard of in another district; thus it sometimes happened that the same event was not adopted throughout the whole country for designating a particular year, and the result was that different systems of dating were employed in different parts of Babylonia. Moreover, when a particular system had been in use for a considerable time, it required a very good memory to retain the order and

period of the various events referred to in the date-formulæ, so as to fix in a moment the date of a document by its mention of one of them. In order to assist themselves in their task of fixing dates in this manner, the scribes of the First Dynasty of Babylon drew up lists of the titles of the years, arranged in chronological order under the reigns of the Kings to which they referred. Some of these lists have been recovered, and they are of the greatest assistance in fixing the chronology, while at the same time they furnish us with considerable information concerning the history of the period of which we should otherwise have been in ignorance.”<sup>1</sup> The above gives an idea of the Babylonian system of dating.

“In settling all problems connected with early Chaldæan chronology, the starting-point was, and in fact still is, the period of Sargon I. of Agade, inasmuch as the date of his reign is settled, according to the reckoning of the scribes of Nabonidus, as about 3800 B.C. It is true that this date has been called in question and ingenious suggestions for amending it have been made by some writers, while others have rejected it altogether, holding that it merely represented a guess on the part of the late Babylonians, and could be safely ignored in the chronological schemes which they brought forward. But nearly every fresh dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt and Western Asia in the Light of Recent Discoveries*, by King and Hall, p. 243 *et seq.*

covery made in the last few years has tended to confirm some point in the traditions current among the later Babylonians with regard to the earlier history of their country. Consequently, reliance may be placed with increased confidence on the truth of such traditions as a whole, and we may continue to accept those statements which yet await confirmation from documents more nearly contemporary with the early period to which they refer. It is true that such a date as that assigned by Nabonidus to Sargon is not to be regarded as absolutely fixed, for Nabonidus is obviously speaking in round numbers, and we may allow for some minor inaccuracies in the calculations of his scribes. But it is certain that the later Babylonian priests and scribes had a wealth of historical material at their disposal which has not come down to us. We may, therefore, accept the date given by Nabonidus for Sargon of Agade and his son Narām-Sin as approximately accurate, and this is also the opinion of the majority of writers on early Babylonian history."<sup>1</sup> The tendency at present is to fix the date of Sargon 1000 years later.<sup>2</sup>

One kingdom had done away with a number of small states, and art, culture, and civilization were in a highly developed state.

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt and Western Asia in the Light of Recent Discoveries*, by King and Hall, p. 185 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> King, Meyer, and others.

“ By the substitution of a great and compact empire for the small rival principalities into which the country was parcelled out, and by the remarkable impulse given to all branches of activity, and by the full expression in all directions of art, a culture, a civilization, the slow development of which had occupied the previous centuries—nay, millenniums—it marks a culminating point in the history of the ancient East.”<sup>1</sup>

The old temple at Nippur, upon which other buildings were erected, is supposed to have been built not later than 7000 to 6000 B.C. “ The vases, bearing long inscriptions, presented to the sanctuary of Nippur at about 4000 B.C. by the Lugal-zaggisi, and the numerous sculptured stones, with inscriptions recording the public buildings, their victories, and their votive offerings, which have come down to us from the Kings of Lagash (now Telloh), and which must belong substantially to the same age, afford conclusive evidence that the actual beginning of art and civilization in Babylonia precede 4000 B.C. by many centuries, not to say by many millennia. It is particularly observable that the art of writing, though the characters are archaic in type, and decidedly ruder than those which appear at a later age, is already, at the date just mentioned, familiarly practised.”<sup>2</sup>

To turn aside for a moment to Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Explorations

<sup>1</sup> *Light from the East*, by Ball, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Authority and Archaeology*, p. 33.

in that country teach us a similar lesson. The date of Menes, the first historical King of Egypt, is fixed by Professor Petrie at 4777 B.C., Budge at 4400 B.C. Excavations have shown that civilization was very advanced in that period. The pyramids of the Fourth Dynasty (3988 B.C.) were highly artistic and remarkably finished. Traces have been discovered in the Valley of the Nile of a race that dwelt there before the time of Menes which was totally unlike the Egyptian race.

Egypt joins with Babylonia and Assyria in proving that the origin of man must date from a period far more remote than that assigned to him in the Old Testament.

Inscriptions in three entirely different languages have been discovered—Sumerian, Babylonian, and Egyptian. All belong to an age considerably earlier than the date given in Biblical chronology.

Professor Sayce says of the chronology "that it is the skeleton, as it were, on which the flesh of history is laid."<sup>1</sup> Some of the early Old Testament events are designated to us as belonging to the age of Abraham, the age of Exodus, or to the Mosaic age. We seek in vain for a chronology in the Old Testament till the reign of David, and even at that comparatively late period we are more in the realm of probabilities than of facts. The early history of the Hebrews is like the early history

<sup>1</sup> *The Early History of the Hebrews*, p. 141 *et seq.*

of the Egyptians in that it has no chronology. The Egyptians measured time by dynasties before the rise of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and from that period dates were used. The only trustworthy method by which dates can be fixed to the events of the patriarchal period or the Exodus is to find synchronism—*i.e.*, tabular arrangement of contemporary events between the Hebrews and the dated history of other peoples or nations.

That it is difficult to harmonize the Biblical data and to form a consistent whole is made evident by the number of Biblical chronologies that have been compiled. It is no longer possible to take the Old Testament data as a reliable basis. There are many reasons that make it impossible. Who can believe that men actually lived nine hundred years or more? And it is equally impossible to believe that man was created at so late a date as that fixed by the chronology of the Old Testament. That the historicity of these numbers is incredible does not do away with the fact that the author had an object in view. He probably had a theory, and built upon it. The round number ten as the number of generations in the first period of the world's history points to a theory. It is not easy to get at his theory on account of the differences in the texts which have been handed down to us.

There are really three systems which are incompatible, and we shall name them briefly.



1. The Massoretic Hebrew text is one. It makes the period from the Creation to the call of Abraham 2,000 solar years, or 2,056 lunar years. This number of years is divided as follows : 1,600 years extending from the Creation to the Deluge, and 400 years from the Flood to the call of Abraham.

2. The Septuagint is the second system of chronology. According to this reckoning 2,200 solar years or 2,262 lunar years elapsed between the Creation and the Flood, which are divided as follows : 1,600 years extending from the Creation to the birth of Noah, and 600 years from that date to the Deluge; and 1,200 are reckoned from the Deluge to the call of Abraham.

3. The Samaritan text is the third system of chronology. The period is divided into two equal parts of 1,200 years each : 1,200 years from the Creation to the birth of the sons of Noah, and 1,200 comprising the rest of the period.

In the section which describes the ten patriarchs we have apparently a Babylonian influence; the ten patriarchs seem to correspond to the ten Babylonian Kings who reigned in the antediluvian period.<sup>1</sup> The Chaldean account assigns 168 myriads of years to the Creation of the world, whereas the Biblical tradition assigns 168 hours—*i.e.*, seven days for the same event. How to explain this remarkable coincidence which is at the same time a contradiction? The Biblical

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, by Gunkel, p. 121 *et seq.*

statement is in keeping with the Jewish conception of God's power in Creation. The idea is that God accomplished in one hour what the Chaldean legend ascribed to 10,000 years.

It is remarkable that the number of weeks in the 1,656 years of Genesis is the number of five-year periods in the Chaldean sum (432,000 years).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Enoch, the seventh in the Biblical list, corresponds to the seventh Babylonian King, who was called by the sun-god into his presence, and instructed in the secrets of astronomy and astrology.<sup>2</sup>

We never find a settled era, a definite date from which years were counted, at the very beginning, or even at an early period, of a nation's history. If anything of this kind has seemed to appear in early times (several nations have attempted to obtain a satisfactory chronological method) it has always turned out to be in the highest degree uncertain, or really to rest on later calculations. The Hebrews are no exception to this rule.

"It is obvious that all these systems (Massoretic Hebrew text, Septuagint, and the Samaritan text) are, like the chronological systems of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, or Hindus, mere artificial schemes of an astronomical character, and differing from the latter only in their more modest computation of time. For

<sup>1</sup> Marti's article "Chronology" in *Encyclopædia Biblica*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Old Testament History*, by H. P. Smith, p. 23.

historical purposes they are worthless, and indicate merely that the materials for a chronology were entirely wanting. The ages assigned to the patriarchs before the Flood, for example, stand on a level with the reigns of the ten antediluvian Kings of Chaldea, which were extended over 120 sari, or 432,000 years. The post-diluvian patriarchs are in no better position; indeed, one of them, Arphaxad, is a geographical title, and the Septuagint interpolates after him a certain Kainan, of whom neither the Hebrew nor the Samaritan text knows anything.”<sup>1</sup>

After the call of Abraham we are not on any more sure footing. The great age of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is marvellous, very improbable, though not quite impossible, and the dates recorded in the narratives do not always agree. There are apparent and, to my mind, real contradictions between certain statements. The birth of Isaac was regarded as an extraordinary event on account of his father's old age, but forty years later six children are born to Abraham after the death of Sarah (Gen. xxv. 1, 2). Again, according to the chronology of Gen. xxv. 26, xxvi. 34, xxxv. 28, Isaac must have been lying upon his death-bed for eighty years.

Then, again, explicit statements are made with regard to the period the Israelites were in Egypt. In Gen. xv. 13 Abraham is told: “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs,

<sup>1</sup> *The Early History of the Hebrews*, p. 143.

and shall serve them : and they shall afflict them four hundred years." In Exod. xii. 40 we are told : " Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." There is a discrepancy between these two accounts.

In Gen. xv. 16 it is stated that " in the fourth generation they shall come hither again "—that is, the children of Israel should return into Canaan. According to this narrative the words were spoken to Abraham, and the fourth generation was that of Joseph himself. But this does not tally with other statements, and so some men make the statement to refer to Moses and Aaron, as the fourth generation from Levi. But, as a matter of fact, Moses and Aaron did not come again to Palestine, and the genealogy of the daughters of Zelophehad (Num. xxvii. 1) makes the generation that did enter Canaan the seventh from Joseph.

" Time, in fact, cannot be reckoned by generations ; we do not know how many links in the chain may have been dropped : ' son ' is Semitic idiom, being frequently equivalent to descendant, while the names are often merely geographical, like Gilead and Machir in the Genealogy of Zelophehad, and therefore have no chronological value." <sup>1</sup>

The case is no better with the chronology of the interval that extends from the Exodus to the building

<sup>1</sup> *The Early History of the Hebrews*, p. 144.

of the Temple of Solomon. We have here, indeed, a check in 1 Kings vi. 1 which makes the building of the Temple begin in the 480th year after the Exodus, but this number makes its appearance at a time when the Temple of Solomon was no more. It bears, moreover, the clear impress of being artificial, for it plainly counts from Moses to David twelve generations of forty years each, which we can easily identify as follows: Moses, Joshua, Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David. If the numbers in the Book of Judges are added, we have 410 years. It leaves seventy years for the sojourn in the wilderness, the judgeship of Eli and Samuel, the reigns of Saul and David, and the first four years of Solomon! I need not enter into discussion of the unsuccessful methods which have been adopted to overcome or account for this palpable difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

That the number 480, however, has really been based on the number forty seems probable. Forty years in Hebrew idiom merely signified an indeterminate and unknown period of time, and the Moabite stone shows that the same idiom existed also in the Moabite language. Mesha says in the inscription: "Omri took the land of Medeba, and [Israel] dwelt in it during his days and half the days of his son, altogether forty years." The real length of time was not

<sup>1</sup> *The Early History of the Hebrews*, p. 142 et seq.; "Chronology" in *Encyclopædia Biblica*.

more than fifteen years. Thus Absalom is said, in 2 Sam. xv. 7, to have asked permission to leave Jerusalem "after forty years,"<sup>1</sup> although the length of time was little more than two years. The period of forty years, which meets us again and again in the Book of Judges, is simply the equivalent of an unknown length of time: it denotes the want of materials and the consequent ignorance of the writer. Twenty, the half of forty, is equally an expression of ignorance; and the only dates available for chronology are those which represent a definite space of time, like the eight years of Chushan-rishathaim's oppression of Israel, or the six years of Jephthah's judgeship.<sup>2</sup>

For Hebrew chronology we must look outside the Bible itself. At certain points Hebrew history comes into touch with the monumental records of Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria, and if we are to date the events it records, it must be by their aid. For a long period Egypt was without a chronology, and in this respect it was in the same state as the Israelites. But we are on surer grounds in Babylonia and Assyria. In Babylonia dates were fixed by the reign of the Kings and the events of the several years of each reign. The great commercial relations of the country, and the contracts that were constantly made between parties, meant that exact dating was a necessity in the land. The

<sup>1</sup> Some versions read "four."

<sup>2</sup> *The Early History of the Hebrews*, p. 145 *et seq.*

Assyrians were more precise in their business transactions than even their neighbours the Babylonians; and of all the Oriental nations the historical instinct was more highly developed in the Assyrians than in any of the others. And at an early age an accurate system of chronology had been devised. But the lists hitherto discovered are of a comparatively late date, about 1000 B.C., and from 909 to 666 B.C. we have a reliable record of time.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Early History of the Hebrews*, p. 147.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TOWER OF BABEL

THE story of the Tower of Babel (Gen. xi. 1-9) suggests that it came from Babylon. No similar Babylonian legend has been discovered. "We have in this story, in the interpretation of the word 'Babel,' an example of that curious etymologizing which I have so often referred to. Properly Babel, or Bab-ilu, to give the ordinary Babylonian form, means 'the gate of God.' It is here interpreted as meaning 'confusion'""<sup>1</sup>

Mankind settled in Babylonia as one community, having one language in common. The inhabitants decided to build a city and a tower that they might keep together. But Yahweh perceived a danger in that they might become too powerful; he made them speak different languages, so that they could not understand one another, they were scattered over the face of the earth. Hence the city was called "confusion." <sup>2</sup> Similar stories of one original language are cited from other folk-lore.

It is evident from the narrative in Genesis that the

<sup>1</sup> *Early Hebrew Story*, by Peters, p. 260.

<sup>2</sup> *Genesis*, by Bennett.



Babylonian culture and antiquity made a deep impression upon the minds of the Israelites.

It is difficult to say for certain what tower is referred to. It has often been supposed to be the Ziggurat (or Zikkurat, from the verb *zukkuru*, to elevate), which is a massive pyramidal tower, ascending in stage-like terraces, with a temple at the top.<sup>1</sup> This is now called Birs Nimroud. It stood in the immediate neighbourhood of Babylon at Borsippa. In one of his inscriptions Nebuchadnezzar says of this Ziggurat that a former King had built it and carried it up to the height of forty-two ells, but had never completed it. It has long since fallen into decay. Any traveller in Babylonia must have observed this striking ruin in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital, and as he pondered over the meaning of these strange structures in general, he must have asked himself in particular why this tower of enormous size was never finished.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Peters says that two different questions are answered in this Babel story, as we have it, which suggests that we have two stories combined in one. One question: Why do men speak different languages? If all people have descended from the same man, why don't they have one and the same language? The second question: What is the origin and purpose of these mighty pyramids that exist in the land?

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 615 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Early Hebrew Story*, p. 261.

Now, whether the traveller drew the answer to the first question out of his own imagination, or whether the people of the country gave him the tradition, we cannot say. But the answer is found in a story (common in other mythologies) of man's insolent ambition to make himself equal to the gods, to contend with them, and take possession of heaven itself. Man sought this object by erecting a tower in steps one above the other. God interfered, confused the language of the men so that they could not speak one to another, and then scattered them into different nations.<sup>1</sup>

The other part of the story, which may have been a part at first of a separate legend, is based on a wrong interpretation of the word "Babel." The meaning may have been put into it, and not derived from it. It may have been an attempt to explain the conditions that existed at the time. In the city of Babel or Babylon men from all parts of the known world met. Different customs and languages came with the men. Taking this city all in all, it must have been a confusion of tongues. There was a mixture in the languages. In the different quarters of the city itself there were the same conditions, on a smaller scale, as in the world at large. In the original story the confusion of tongues was brought about possibly by the gods, but when it became part of the religion of Israel, God caused the confusion.

<sup>1</sup> *Early Hebrew Story*, pp. 261, 262.

“As I have said, no parallel myth or legend has yet been found in the Babylonian records ; and, indeed, this story sounds rather like travellers' tales, told by simple but pious Israelites, who had visited the distant land of Babylon and brought home tales of its wonders and their explanation of the same, partly as they heard them there, partly as they themselves expounded them.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Early Hebrew Story*, p. 263.

## CHAPTER XII

### FROM ABRAHAM TO JOSEPH

WE will limit our observations to Gen. xi. 27-32.

“ And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees ” (verse 28). Ur (Ass. *Uru*) was an important city, and much more ancient than Babylon. Two of the early Kings of Ur—Ur-bau and his son Dungi (about 2800 B.C.)—have left engraved cylinders, numerous buildings, works of art in Ur and in the surrounding towns. Ur was an important commercial centre. The Euphrates ran almost by its gates, and formed a means of communication with Upper Syria, while the city had roads that joined it with Southern Syria and with Arabia.

The well-known god of Ur was Sin, the moon-god.

The Chaldees (Heb. *Kasdim*). Professor Sayce is of opinion that the word “ Chaldees ” did not belong originally to Ur, and that it is of Palestinian addition.<sup>1</sup> *Kasdim* is the Hebrew word for Chaldees, and the Babylonian and Assyrian form is *Kaldū* (“ Chal-dæans ”). It is a tribe which is often mentioned in

<sup>1</sup> *Monuments*, p. 158 *et seq.*

the inscriptions from 880 B.C. The Chaldees settled at that time in Lower Babylonia (the Persian Gulf is called the "sea of the land of Kaldū"), and as they developed in strength and influence they gradually moved inland. In 721 B.C. Merodach-baladan, "King of the land of Kaldū," made himself for twelve years King of Babylon; and ultimately, under Nabopolassar (625-605 B.C.) and Nebuchadnezzar (604-561 B.C.) the Kaldū became the ruling caste in Babylonia.<sup>1</sup>

Haran (verse 28). This word has presented a great deal of difficulty. "The initial letter (He) of this name in Hebrew is different from that (Heth) of the place Haran in verses 31, 32. Nevertheless, it has been supposed that the one is a corruption of the other, and that this Haran is the place personified."<sup>2</sup> This is a doubtful theory; we are uncertain whether Haran is the name of a place, a people, a deity, or an individual.

It is true that an ancient city named Haran or Kharran has been discovered. Its site is on the bank of the Belikh, a tributary which runs into the Euphrates. If we compare Gen. xxiv. 10—"And the servant took ten camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor"—with Gen. xxvii. 43—"Now therefore, my son,

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, by Driver, p. 141; *Genesis*, by Bennett, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> *Genesis*, by Driver, p. 141.

obey my voice ; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran"—it appears that Kharran was in Mesopotamia, in the Hebrew, *Aram-Naharaim*—*i.e.*, Aram (or Syria) of the two rivers.<sup>1</sup> "The Egyptian inscriptions mention this region under the name Naharina, and the Tel-el-Amarna letters (about 1400 B.C.) under the names Nakhrima and Narima. The Hebrew designation is clearer than the English. The region north-east of Palestine was inhabited largely by Armæan (or Syrian) tribes, and 'Aram of Naharaim' denotes that part of the region which lay between the 'two rivers,' whether the rivers meant be the Euphrates and the Tigris, in the upper part of their courses, or, as others think more probable, the Euphrates in its upper course and the Habor (2 Kings xvii., xviii. 11), now the Khabour, a river flowing into the Euphrates from the north, some distance to the east of the Belikh."

Kharran was a very important city for thousands of years, though there is nothing remaining of it except a few mounds and the remains of a medieval castle. The name frequently occurs on the Assyrian tablets. Sin, the Moon-god, was worshipped here. And Nabonaid, the last King of Babylon (555-538 B.C.), restored, according to two of his inscriptions, the temple of the Moon-god in Ur and Kharran.<sup>2</sup>

It is stated that Abraham's home was in Ur, and that he left Ur and settled in Canaan. But Gen. xi. 28

<sup>1</sup> *Authority and Archæology*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

states that Ur was the "land of Abraham's birthplace," whereas in Gen. xxiv. 7 the same words are applied (as appears from a comparison of verse 4 and xxvii. 43) to Kharran; and also other passages in Genesis convey the idea that the writers took Kharran to be the dwelling-place of Abraham's kindred. Two traditions, says Dr. Driver, seem to have been current with regard to the primitive home of the Hebrews, one connecting them with Ur, in South Babylonia, the other connecting them with Kharran, in North-West Mesopotamia. It should be noted that the names of Hebrew or Canaanitish persons who resided in Babylonia, even before the age of Abraham, have been discovered on contract tablets, and it serves to prove that greater social and commercial intercourse existed between Babylonia and the West than was thought possible at one time. But it cannot be positively said that Abraham migrated from Ur. Nothing to that effect has been discovered hitherto in the inscriptions.

#### LOT'S RESCUE.

In the Book of Genesis (xiv.) we have an account of the rescue of Lot and his retinue.

Verses 1-12. Four Kings from the East defeat the five Kings of the Valley of the Jordan (Sodom and Gomorrah). The five Kings are defeated in the "Vale of Siddim." The conquerors spoil the cities, and Lot is carried away captive.

In this chapter we deal with records that are to some extent confirmed by the Babylonian inscriptions. That Amraphel, King of Shinar; Arioch, King of Ellasar; Chedorlaomer, King of Elam; and Tidal, King of nations, were historical personages may be assumed as accurate. They are not mythological characters. It is very probable that Elam was at one time the greatest power in the countries that lay east of the Euphrates, which verses 5, 9, and 17 imply; and it is quite likely that the dominant power of the eastern countries held a certain sway over Palestine during the same period, and warlike expeditions similar to the one described in this chapter were not uncommon. That the four Eastern Kings named in this chapter were contemporaries is probable, and also that Elam was the most dominant power of the four at the time. To that extent the inscriptions confirm the authenticity of this narrative.<sup>1</sup>

Whether these Eastern Kings undertook a joint expedition against Palestine, or against the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and whether a battle was fought in the mysterious Valley of Siddim, which was noted for its slime-pits, we cannot say. The inscriptions neither confirm nor deny the narrative. No mention is made by any tablet of Abraham, Lot, or Melchizedek.

“The monuments, again, . . . though they have

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, by Bennett, p. 185.



thrown *some* light on the Kings' names mentioned in Gen. xiv. 1, and have shown that it would be no impossibility for a Babylonian or Elamite King of the twenty-third century B.C. to undertake an expedition to the Far West, that no mention of the *particular* expedition recorded in Gen. xiv., they consequently furnish no independent corroboration of it, nor do they contribute anything to neutralize the improbabilities which, rightly or wrongly, have been supposed to attach to details of it. . . . They thus fall far short of demonstrating its historical character. (Mr. Grote long ago pointed out the fallacy of arguing that because a given person was historical, therefore a particular exploit attributed to him by tradition was historical likewise.) And still less do they demonstrate that the rôle attributed to Abraham in the same chapter is historical. The evidence for both these facts rests at present solely upon the evidence of the Book of Genesis itself. Upon the same testimony we may believe Melchizedek to have been a historical figure, whose memory was handed down by tradition; but no evidence of the fact is afforded by the traditional inscriptions." <sup>1</sup>

"Hence archæology by itself does not at present establish the authenticity of the whole chapter. It is true, as we have said, that certain Kings mentioned here are shown to be historical personages; but we

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, by Driver, pp. xlix, l.

cannot therefore conclude that the whole account is accurate history, any more than we can argue that Sir Walter Scott's *Anne of Geierstein* is throughout a correct account of actual events because we know that Charles the Bold and Margaret of Anjou were real people."<sup>1</sup> "Scholars are divided as to the historical value of the chapter. Some are inclined to accept it as substantially a record of facts; others find little or nothing historical beyond the names of the four Kings; while others occupy positions intermediate between these extremes."<sup>1</sup>

### JOSEPH.<sup>2</sup>

According to Biblical criticism, more than one author has written the story of Joseph.<sup>3</sup> If so, it is more difficult to understand the history of Joseph. To keep strictly to the title of this book one should not enter the land of Egypt at all. But we wish to make a digression in this brief treatment of the ever-fascinating story of Joseph. These chapters give an insight into some of the customs, the events of Egyptian history, Egyptian social and political life, and Egyptian literature which are confirmed by the Egyptian inscriptions.

Joseph's experiences with Potiphar and his wife (Gen. xxxix. 7 *et seq.*) are held by many scholars to be

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, by Driver, pp. 185-187.

<sup>2</sup> See Genesis xxxix., l.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph, in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*; in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*; *The Book of Genesis*, by Driver; *Genesis*, by Bennett.

a version of an Egyptian romance entitled "The Tale of the Two Brothers." The tale can be traced back to the Eighteenth Dynasty, and it is maintained that the romance is grafted to an Israelitish tribal hero. For the complete tale we must ask the reader to turn elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> There were two brothers—the elder Anup, the younger Bata—who were much attached to each other. Bata managed Anup's affairs with great success. One day when they were ploughing together Bata came to the house for some seed, leaving Anup in the field. Anup's wife tempted Bata without success, and when Anup returned in the evening his wife told him that Bata had outraged her. Anup rushed out to kill Bata, who, however, was protected by Re, the Sun-god, and at last convinced Anup of his innocence, whereupon Anup went home and killed his wife. The end of the story resembles the end of the story of Joseph. Bata had an adventurous career, which is characteristic of fairy-tales, and ultimately became the King of Egypt.

"The conditions of the semi-Asiatic rule of Amenhotep IV. and his apparently Semitic Vizier, Janhamu, seem to be reflected in the story of Joseph's promotion to favour and his government of Egypt. The historian (or storian) of Joseph was familiar, also, with the peculiar agrarian conditions of Egypt, dating from a still earlier period, but connected by him with the

<sup>1</sup> *Life in Ancient Egypt*, by Erman, English translation, p. 378 *et seq*; *Egyptian Tales*, by Petrie (1895), ii., p. 36 *et seq*; *Monuments*, by Sayce, p. 209 *et seq*.

hero of his story. The Egyptian names used in the narrative, on the other hand, appear to belong to a much later period, not earlier, certainly, than 1000 B.C. Altogether we have in Joseph's story a most interesting combination of elements from various sources and periods, woven together with such art as to give a vivid, personal narrative.

“The facts which the Egyptian inscriptions have disclosed favour the theory that the story of Joseph was written in a comparatively late period. It is not stated which Pharaoh ruled at the time. Nor is it stated in Exodus. The Egyptian name Zaphnath-Pa-neah and other similar names have been discovered for the first time in the Twentieth Dynasty (1300 B.C.), but oftener in the Twenty-Second Dynasty (1000 B.C.). Asnath and other names were familiar in Egypt, and have been found on the tablets later than the age of Joseph. It is very seldom that Asnath is met with earlier than the Twenty-Second Dynasty. The combination, in a single narrative, of names, all otherwise rare or unknown at an early period, is remarkable; and though future discoveries may correct the inference, it is impossible not to feel that it creates a presumption against their being historical.”<sup>1</sup>

“We must admit that, while archæology has richly illustrated the possibility of the main outline of the Book of Genesis from Abraham to Joseph, it has not

<sup>1</sup> *Authority and Archæology*, p. 52.

one whit of proof to offer for the personal existence or characters of the Patriarchs themselves. . . . But amidst all the crowded life we peer in vain for any trace of the fathers of the Hebrews, we listen in vain for any mention of their names. This is the whole change archæology has wrought: it has given us a background and an atmosphere for the stories of Genesis; it is unable to recall, or to certify, their heroes.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* by G. A. Smith, pp. 101, 102.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

THOUGH the inscriptions throw some light on the foreign tribes or places or deities which are recorded in the books which stand between the Pentateuch and the Books of Kings, yet the history of them remains in obscurity. "During the whole period from Merenptah to the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam there is no mention, upon the monuments at present known, either of the Israelites in general, or of individual leaders or Kings, or of any of the foreign wars or invasions by which, during this period, the Old Testament describes them as being assailed. So far as the inscriptions are concerned, the history of Israel during the entire period is a blank."<sup>1</sup>

But the epoch that covers the Books of Kings is different. On a Moabite inscription are the names of Omri and Ahab. It is evident that there were very intimate relations between Assyria and Israel and Judah from 900 B.C. The direct relations between Assyria and the other two nations during that period

<sup>1</sup> *Authority and Archæology*, p. 80.

surpassed anything that went before, so far as we can tell. Assyrian splendour was at its height ; and the Kings of Assyria, in their frequent military expeditions, often came into hostile relation with the tribes of Western Asia. And for that reason occasions presented themselves for the Kings of Israel and Judah to be mentioned by name, or for public events to be inscribed in the Assyrian annals which are recorded in the Old Testament.

The light of the tablets cannot be confined to the period covered by the Kings ; the inscriptions supply valuable information that sheds a flood of light upon the prophetic writings of the Old Testament respecting the policy and movements of the Assyrian Kings, and serve to illumine many an obscure saying and a dark passage.

The first Hebrew names that have been discovered on the Assyrian tablets are Omri and Ahab ; from that time onwards the names of Benhadad (who was King over Syria during the reign of Ahab), Jehu, Hazael, Pekah, Ahaz, and Hezekiah are mentioned. There are recorded Tiglath-pileser's invasion of Palestine, Sargon's conquest of Samaria, Syria's overthrow by Sennacherib, and his march as far as Jerusalem, the tribute which he levied, and his disappearance in the direction of the North.

Biblical criticism has not cast any doubt upon the names, nor the facts which are narrated in these books.

The critics hold that the Books of Kings were compiled from well-known contemporary histories. The critics are of opinion that later interpolations have been inserted which are of less historical value—narratives that receive no light whatsoever from the inscriptions.<sup>1</sup>

“What critics have judged to be late, and probably of less historic value, have been certain narratives, for which archæology has no evidence to offer, as well as the framework in which the editor has bound the whole history, and supplied, out of a general scheme, a chronology, from the standpoint of a later age, a religious sentence on each monarch’s reign.”<sup>2</sup>

The chronology of the Books of Kings is inaccurate. “Even the chronology of the divided kingdom after the death of Solomon, in spite of the synchronisms the compiler of the Books of Kings has endeavoured to establish between the Kings of Judah and those of Israel, has been the despair of historians, and scheme after scheme has been proposed, in order to make it self-consistent. The Assyrian monuments, however, have now come to our help.”<sup>3</sup> “For, while testifying to the reality of Omri, Ahab, Jehu, and some of their successors, as well as of the leading events of the

<sup>1</sup> *I. and II. Books of Kings*, by Professor Skinner; see the Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> *The Early History of the Hebrews*, by Sayce, p. 146. For the chronology of the Hebrew kingdoms, see *The Prophets of Israel*, by W. Robertson Smith, p. 145 *et seq.*, 404, 415 *et seq.*



history, it has shown from the contemporary Assyrian data that the chronology, approximately correct so far as the distance of one man or event from another is concerned, has been placed by the editor from twelve to twenty years too early—obviously in order to fit it into the general system, adopted by the Hebrew editors, of reckoning the years from Exodus to the fall of the first Temple and the return from Exile.”<sup>1</sup>

“The accuracy of the canons can in many cases be checked by the information which we possess independently of the reigns of many of the Kings, as of Tiglath-pileser, Sargon, and Sennacherib. Thus, from 902 B.C. the Assyrian chronology is certain and precise. Reducing now the Assyrian dates to years B.C., and comparing them with the Biblical chronology, some serious discrepancies at once reveal themselves, the nature and extent of which will be most clearly perceived by a brief tabular synopsis”<sup>2</sup> (see p. 108).

“Manifestly,” Dr. Driver says, “all the Biblical dates earlier than 734 B.C. are too high, and must be considerably reduced; the two events also in Hezekiah’s reign, the fall of Samaria, and the invasion of Sennacherib, which the Biblical writer treats as separated by an interval of eight years, were separated in reality by an interval of twenty-one years. . . . The fact itself agrees with what has long been

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Authority and Archæology*, p. 118.

perceived by critics—viz., that the chronological system of the Books of Kings does not form part of the original documents preserved in them, but is the work of the compiler, and shows signs of having been arrived at through computation from the regnal years of the successive Kings, the errors which it displays being due to the fact that either the data at the compiler's disposal or his calculations were in some cases incorrect." <sup>1</sup>

	Dates according to Ussher's Chronology.	Dates according to Assyrian Inscription.
Reign of Ahab ... ..	918-897	
Ahab named at the Battle of Karkar		854
Reign of Jehu ... ..	884-856	
Tribute of Jehu ... ..		842
Reign of Menahem ... ..	772-761	
Menahem mentioned by Tiglath-pileser ... ..		738
Reign of Pekah ... ..	759-730	
Pekah dethroned by Tiglath-pileser		734 <sup>2</sup>
Reign of Ahaz ... ..	742-726	
Ahaz mentioned by Tiglath-pileser		734
Hezekiah's accession ... ..	726	
Fall of Samaria in Hezekiah's sixth year <sup>3</sup> ... ..	721	722
Invasion of Sennacherib in Hezekiah's fourteenth year <sup>4</sup> ... ..	713	701

<sup>1</sup> *Authority and Archæology*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> According to other authorities, 733 or 732.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings xviii. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LAWS OF MOSES IN THE LIGHT OF THE CODE OF HAMMURABI

THE Code of Hammurabi is undoubtedly one of the finest codes of laws in the history of the human race. It came to light during the month of December and January, 1901-1902. M. J. de Morgan, of the French Exploration Expedition, discovered the tablets in Elam, at Susa, which is situated on the banks of the Euphrates. The Elamites were the great rivals of Babylonia for centuries. It may be that an Elamite conqueror carried off the stone from the temple of Sippara, in Babylonia.

The antiquity and the original character of the law of Moses can no longer be maintained. The Code of Hammurabi bears a very striking resemblance to it in many ways, but it is much older than the law of Moses. The Code was enacted by Hammurabi, the great and mighty King of Babylon. It dates from about 2250 B.C., but on the basis of his recently-discovered chronicles, Mr. L. W. King now brings the date of Hammurabi down to about 1900 B.C.<sup>1</sup> (the date is doubtful). The Civil

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles concerning Early Babylonian Kings*, vol. i., p. 136 et seq.

Code of Hammurabi is inscribed upon a block of black diorite, and in size it is rather more than two metres high, containing about 8,000 words. The law enables us to obtain a very clear insight into the advanced state of civilization which was prevalent about 2000 B.C. in the South of Babylon. The ideal of equity which prevailed among the people in that remote age was surprisingly high. It is evident that in those early times the same fundamental principles prevailed as were current at a later age in Israel. The life of the Israelites under Moses was much simpler than that of the Babylonians under Hammurabi. The latter was far more complicated and advanced. One striking instance is the advanced stage surgery must have reached in medical science. If a patient dies through an unsuccessful operation the surgeon must pay a heavy fine, and his licence is forfeited. The discovery of the Code of Hammurabi has established the fact beyond the shadow of a doubt that it is much older than what is commonly called the law of Moses. We do not wish to imply for a moment that the younger code of laws was borrowed from the older. What we do affirm is that the same sense of justice and mercy exists, but are differently applied, in the two codes, because the circumstances of the Code of Hammurabi were very different from those of the time of Moses. And, on the whole, it may be that a more humane tendency is developed in some of the provisions of the law of Israel.

The ceremonial law is conspicuous by its absence from the Code of Hammurabi. As there is no trace of it, it may be claimed that the law of Israel is older. There are at least two weighty objections to this view. The oldest laws of Israel, the Book of the Covenant, contains no directions concerning rites and ceremonies in relation to the sacrifices to be observed at the public worship generally. And also it is well known that the sacrificial rites of Israel, as we shall show elsewhere, differ not from the customs observed in the East in olden times. And for that reason the Israelite cultus could be denounced by the prophets of Israel and Judah as heathen. As a matter of fact, the ceremonial law of Israel belongs to the common stock of nations of antiquity.

The inscription has forty-four columns, and falls into three divisions. Something like 700 lines are devoted by the King to describe his titles, his glory, and beneficent deeds for his people, his worship of the gods, and incidentally naming the cities and districts in his dominion, and many interesting glimpses into local cults. He wishes well for those who should preserve and esteem his monument, but declares imprecations for any who should damage or remove it.

Hammurabi immortalized himself, not as Alexander the Great by conquering the world, but as a wise, just, and strong ruler. He built many new temples, rebuilt and renovated many old ones; he opened canals, im-

proved the soil, relieved distresses, proclaimed the right, upheld the law, and his laws made the life and property of his subjects secure.

### THE CODE.

We will quote from the laws of Hammurabi which throw light on the laws of Moses. The Code of Hammurabi has been translated, and may be found in a convenient form in *The Oldest Code of Laws in the World*, by C. H. W. Johns ; *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, Appendix, by T. G. Pinches ; *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi*, by S. A. Cook. The order in which the laws stand is defective, and we will try to classify some of them under their proper titles.

### *Agriculture.*

In Babylonia agriculture formed an important part in the lives of the inhabitants, and the Code contains important laws which set forth the relation between landlord and tenant ; the laws define the conditions under which recovery of waste land can be effected ; they state the wages fixed by the harvester or for the hire of a cart. The landlord of this age supplied implements and oxen to his tenants, and received in return a fixed proportion of the profits derived from them. Such a system had its advantages and disadvantages,

so laws were enacted which safeguarded the interests of both parties.

253. If a man has hired a man to reside in his field and has furnished him seed, has entrusted him the oxen and harnessed them for cultivating the field—if that man has stolen the corn or plants, and they have been seized in his hands, one shall cut off his hands.

254. If he has taken the seed, worn out the oxen, from the seed which he has hoed he shall restore.

Very interesting are the laws which regulate the payment for the cultivation of virgin soil. The landlord could not claim rent until the expiration of four years. The owner shared then in the same proportion as the tiller of the soil.

60. If a man has given a field to a gardener to plant a garden, and the gardener has planted the garden, four years he shall rear the garden; in the fifth year the owner of the garden and the gardener shall share equally; the owner of the garden shall cut off his share and take it.

Canals were used very extensively in the country as a means of transit or irrigation. The dikes had to be constantly strengthened and kept in good repair, so as not to be a serious menace to the produce of the land. Carelessness in this respect carried with it heavy penalties.

53. If a man has neglected to strengthen his bank of the canal, has not strengthened his bank, a breach has opened out itself in his bank, and the waters have carried away the meadow, the man in whose bank the breach has been opened shall render back the corn which he has caused to be lost.

54. If he is not able to send back the corn, one shall give him and his goods for money, and the people of the meadow whose corn the water has carried away shall share it.

That is, the man must be sold into slavery.

*Possessions.*

250. If a wild bull in his charge has gored a man and caused him to die, that case has no remedy.

251. If the ox has pushed a man, by pushing has made known his vice, and he has not blunted his horn, has not shut up his ox, and that ox has gored a man of gentle birth and caused him to die, he shall pay half a mina of silver.

And for a slave it was one-third.

252. If a gentleman's servant, he shall pay one-third of a mina of silver.

Exod. xxi. 28-32. If the ox was wont to gore, and its propensity had been testified to the owner, and he had not kept it secured, the owner was put to death. But if a ransom was laid upon him, he must pay what



was demanded. For a male or female slave, thirty shekels was to be paid to the master. Greater value is attached to the life of a slave than in the Code of Hammurabi.

15-20. If a man has caused either a palace slave or palace maid or a slave of a poor man or a poor man's maid to go out of the gate, he shall be put to death.

If a man has harboured in his house a manservant or a maidservant, fugitive from the palace, or a poor man, and has not produced them at the command of the commandant, the owner of that house shall be put to death.

If a man has captured either a manservant or a maidservant, a fugitive, in the open country, and has driven him back to his master, the owner of the slave shall pay him two shekels of silver.

If that slave will not name his owner, he shall drive him to the palace, and one shall inquire into his past, and cause him to return to his owner.

If he confine that slave in his house, and afterwards the slave has been seized in his hand, that man shall be put to death.

If the slave has fled from the hand of his captor, that man shall swear by the name of God to the owner of the slave, and shall go free.

Deut. xxiii. 15, 16. The law was very different in Israel. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master a

servant which is escaped from his master unto thee ; he shall dwell with thee, in the midst of thee, in the place which he shall choose within one of thy gates, where it liketh him best : thou shalt not oppress him."

"Laws relating to the protection of slaves and animals from cruelty or injury (245-248) are more probably framed with the intent to insure their protection as property, whereas in the Hebrew legislation the analogous injunctions spring rather from feelings of pure kindness. The furtherance of trade and commerce, together with the protection of property and the maintenance of peace, have tempered the Babylonian laws with justice, although the penalties for their infraction are frequently severe and brutal."<sup>1</sup>

The Code of Hammurabi, as well as the Laws of Moses, were severe on the thief in the night.

22-25. If a man has carried on brigandage, and has been captured, that man shall be put to death.

If the brigand has not been caught, the man who has been despoiled shall recount before God what he has lost, and the city and governor in whose land and district the brigandage took place shall render back to him whatever of his was lost.

If it was a life, the city and governor shall pay one mina of silver to his people.

<sup>1</sup> *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi*, by S. A. Cook, p. 275.

If in a man's house a fire has been kindled, and a man who has come to extinguish the fire has lifted up his eyes to the property of the owner of the house, and has taken the property of the owner of the house, that man shall be thrown into that fire.

Exod. xxii. 1-4. "If a man shall steal an ox or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. If the thief be found breaking in, and be smitten that he die, there shall be no blood-guiltiness for him. If the sun be risen upon him there shall be blood-guiltiness for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the theft be found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep, he shall pay double."

8. If the thief has naught to pay, he shall be put to death; in Exodus he shall be sold.

General cases of lost or stolen property are treated at length in the Code of Hammurabi (9-13), whereas they are very short in the Laws of Moses (Exod. xxii. 9).

### *Trade.*

The shipping trade formed an important part in the life of the Babylonians. From a commercial point of view the inhabitants of Babylonia and Assyria led a very strenuous life. Towns and cities were joined to-

gether by canals. Many of the modern methods of commerce can be traced back to Babylonia and Assyria. It was very different in Israel at first. The modern Jew loves commerce, but ancient Israel despised it. Their ideas were simple, and their methods were very primitive. In this they shared the ways which were common to all the early Semites. Business was transacted in Babylonia and Assyria on what is commonly termed in modern life "strictly business lines." "In Babylon no business was legal unless a deed, drawn up and duly signed, had made it so; but when Abraham had paid the price which made him master of Machpelah, the bargain was concluded, and no mention made of any written document."

There was a clear understanding between the merchant and his agent.

101. If where he has gone he has not seen prosperity, he shall make up and return the money he took, and the agent shall give to the merchant.

122. If a man shall give silver, gold, or anything whatever to a man on deposit, all whatever he shall give he shall show to witnesses and fix bonds, and shall give on deposit.

Lev. vi. 2 *et seq.* "If any one sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and deal falsely with his neighbour in a matter of deposit . . . then it shall be, if he hath sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore . . . the deposit

which was committed to him . . . he shall even restore it in full, and shall add the fifth part more thereto : unto him to whom it appertaineth shall he give it, in the day of his being found guilty."

123. If without a witness and bonds he has given on deposit, and where he has deposited they keep disputing him, this case has no remedy.

The power of the lender was limited by several special laws (268 *et seq.*).

### *The Administration of Justice.*

The method of administering justice was more advanced in Babylonia and Assyria than it was amongst the primitive Semites. In Babylonia a judge presided at each court, but the primitive Semites had no judge. The judge had to be present sometimes when his sentence was executed. First of all, he had to see if there was a true bill. If the judge was satisfied that there were sufficient reasons for further legal proceedings, then he gave orders that witnesses must appear before a given date. The term witness had more than one meaning ; each plaintiff must be his own counsel to plead his own case.

The gate of the city was the place of judgment in ancient Babylonia and in Israel (1 Sam. vii. 16 ; Job xxix. 7 *et seq.*). " In later times the Babylonians

built temples at the city gates, and transferred the trials to the temple courts."

Certain cases were common both to the Babylonians and the Israelites. Where there was a lack of evidence or other causes to prevent the cases being tried by any human method, then they were transferred to the decision of the deity in a trial by ordeal. The woman suspected of infidelity to her husband was cast upon the waters of the river. If she should float, she was deemed not guilty; but if she sank and was drowned, it was considered a sign of divine vengeance, brought about through her unfaithfulness.

2. If a man has put a spell upon a man, and has not justified himself, he upon whom the spell is laid shall go to the holy river; he shall plunge into the holy river, and if the holy river overcome him, he who wove the spell upon him shall take to himself his house. If the holy river makes that man to be innocent, and has saved him, he who laid the spell upon him shall be put to death. He who plunged into the holy river shall take to himself the house of him who wove the spell upon him.

132. If a wife of a man on account of another male has had the finger pointed at her, and has not been caught in lying with another male, for her husband she shall plunge into the holy river.

5. If a judge has judged a judgment, decided a decision, granted a sealed sentence, and afterwards

has altered his judgment, that judge, for the alteration of the judgment that he judged, one shall put him to account, and he shall pay twelvefold the penalty which was in the said judgment, and in the assembly one shall expel him from his judgment-seat, and he shall not return, and with the judges at a judgment he shall not take his seat.

Exod. xxiii. 6 *et seq.* "Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. Keep thee far from a false matter ; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not : for I will not justify the wicked. And thou shalt take no gift : for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous."

### *The Family Relationship.*

The Code of Hammurabi shows clearly that woman was regarded as an inferior being to man. Woman could trade and do business, on her own account or in partnership. She could act as witness or plaintiff in the law-courts. She could hold property of her own and dispose of it as she liked. With regard to the position of woman in Babylonia and Israel, Delitzsch says : "The woman in Israel is the property of her parents, and, later on, of her husband ; she is a valuable element for purposes of work, on whom, in married life, a large part of the largest business of the home

is imposed ; above all, she is, as in Islam, incompetent to take part in the practice of the cultus. In the case of the Babylonians all this was managed differently and better. . . . It is just in the domain of questions concerning women that it can clearly be seen how profoundly Babylonian culture has been influenced by the non-Semitic civilization of the Sumerians.”<sup>1</sup> And Sayce remarks : “ In the old Sumerian hymns the woman takes precedence of the man. The Semitic translation invariably reverses the order : the one has ‘ female and male,’ the other ‘ male and female ’ ; and this is reflected in the position of the goddess Ishtar, who, originally a goddess, the equal of the god, became changed into the male deity in Southern Arabia and Moab.”<sup>2</sup>

“ But it will ultimately be made clear that the woman, notwithstanding this, is the legal chattel of the man even in the Code of Hammurabi, and when all evidence has been reviewed, it will be found that her position is scarcely more independent than it was in early Arabian life. The theory, therefore, of a Sumerian (non-Semitic) state of culture where woman’s position was perfectly independent must be regarded as questionable for the present.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Babel and Bible*, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> *The Religion of Ancient Assyria and Babylonia*, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi*, pp. 72, 73. See *Egypt and Western Asia in the Light of Recent Discoveries*, by King and Hall, p. 265 *et seq.*



163. If a man has married a wife, and she has not granted him children, that woman has gone to her fate ; if his father-in-law has returned him the dowry that that man brought to the house of his father-in-law, her husband shall have no claim on her marriage portion : it belongs to the house of her father forsooth.

130. If a man has forced the wife of a man who has not known the male, and is dwelling in the house of her father, and has laid in her bosom, and one has caught him, that man shall be killed ; the woman herself shall go free.

Exod. xxii. 16 is different : the cases are not parallel.

There are different punishments for adultery.

157. Intercourse with a man's own mother is punished by burning both.

129. If the wife of a man has been caught in lying with another male, one shall bind them and throw them into the waters.

155. If a man has betrothed a bride to his son and his son has not known her, and he has laid in her bosom, and one has caught him, that man one shall bind and cast him into the waters.

154. If a man has known his daughter, that man one shall expel from the city.

158. If a man, after his father, has been caught in the bosom of her that brought him up, who has borne children, that man shall be cut from his father's house.

## The Law of Moses :

Lev. xx. 11 *et seq.* If a man lieth with his father's wife or daughter-in-law both of them shall be put to death.

14. If a man take a wife and her mother, they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they.

17. If a man shall take his sister they shall be cut off.

20, 21. If a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, his brother's wife, they shall be childless.

*To Protect the Widow and the Fatherless.*

172. If her husband did not give her a settlement, one shall pay her her marriage portion, and from the goods of her husband's house she shall take her share like one son. If her sons worry her to leave the house, the judge shall inquire into her reasons, and shall lay the blame on the sons; that woman shall not go out of her husband's house.

If that woman has set her face to leave, the settlement which her husband gave her she shall leave to her sons, the marriage portion from her father's house she shall take, and she shall marry the husband of her choice.

177. If a widow whose children are young has set her face to enter into the house of another, without consent of a judge, she shall not enter. When she enters into the house of another, the judge shall inquire into what is left of her former husband's house, and

the house of her former husband to her later husband, and that woman he shall entrust and cause them to receive a deed. They shall keep the house and rear the little ones. Not a utensil shall they give for money. The buyer that has bought a utensil of a widow's sons shall lose his money, and shall return the property to its owners.

Deut. xxiv. 17. "Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless, nor take the widow's raiment for pledge."

Deut. xxvii. 19. "Cursed be he that wresteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow."

We cannot recall any law in the Old Testament which is so definite on the question of justice to the widow and the fatherless as the laws that were in force in the days of Hammurabi.

### *Religion.*

It is said that religion is absent from the Code of Hammurabi, whereas it forms an important part in the Laws of Moses. Two things can be said in reply to that statement: (1) The Code of Hammurabi has to do with the people as citizens; it is a civil Code. The letters of Hammurabi prove that the King was intensely religious. The temples were honoured institutions in the land during his illustrious reign. It

was the temple's duty to provide the ransom necessary to procure the release from captivity of a native of the town within whose walls it was situated. 32 . . . ! If in his house there is no means for his ransom, he shall be ransomed from the temple of his city ; if in the temple of his city there is not means for his ransom, his field, his garden, and his home shall not be given for his ransom. (2) Babylonia had its sacred books, and they fall into three classes. The Babylonian Ceremonial Law is partly known to us through religious texts, hymns, penitential psalms, and magical texts and incantations. And they closely resemble the Ceremonial Law of Israel in some things.

There are resemblances and differences between the Code of Hammurabi and the Law of Moses.

The Code of Laws was not invented by the famous King and presented to a grateful people. They were codified customs. And their development cannot be limited within a short period. The period must have extended far behind Hammurabi. The laws developed from customs, and a considerable length of time must be allowed for any custom to become fixed and binding on all the people. The laws contained the decisions of the judges on special cases which were brought before them.

Hammurabi is represented receiving the laws from the seated sun-god Shamash, " the judge of heaven and

earth." The sun-god Shamash was the god of law, whose children are called "Justice" and "Right."<sup>1</sup> Hammurabi himself takes credit for the laws, but addresses the Babylonian god before and after the Code. "The great gods have chosen me," he declares; and again, "I am Hammurabi, to whom Shamash has entrusted judgment." He chooses it in a way which reminds us strikingly of the last two chapters of the Book of Deuteronomy; blessings rich and plentiful are the happy lot of those who keep his laws, but terrible curses are heaped upon him who despises their authority.<sup>2</sup>

Moses was Israel's lawgiver. The civil laws contain many of the decisions of the judges; nevertheless, it is asserted that Moses received the law on Mount Sinai from God in the same way as Hammurabi received his Code from Shamash. The reason why Sinai was chosen was probably this: the Hebrews regarded Sinai in the same light as the Greeks regarded Olympus. "It was the Olympus of the Hebrew peoples, the earthly seat of the Godhead, and as such it continued to be regarded by the Israelites even after their settlement in Palestine (Judg. v. 4, 5). This immemorial sanctity of Sinai it was that led to its being selected as the ideal scene of the giving of the Law, not conversely."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Babel and Bible*, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> *The Interpreter*, January, 1905, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> *History of Israel and Judah*, by Wellhausen, p. 20.

What is the connection between the Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi? On this question there are differences of opinion. We have already seen that while Israel was in Canaan the people learnt how to make use of old Babylonian legends. And we shall see later on that the Jewish Temple, its ritualism, etc., bore great resemblance to the Babylonian temples. Literary resemblance exists between the Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi. Many of the laws are the same; the phraseology in places is very similar.

It is impossible to say at present how intimate is the connection between them.

It is more than probable that the Laws of Moses, as well as the institutions and customs, manifested those elements which, on account of their vitality, received strong acknowledgment after the nation had settled in Canaan, and then were traced back to Moses as their progenitor. And in order to increase the sacred character of the laws, they were traced back to Jehovah Himself as the chief Lawgiver. "Nobody asserts that the Ten Commandments were borrowed, even partially, from Babylonia; stress rather is laid on pointing out that such commandments as the fifth, sixth, and seventh owe their origin to an instinct of self-preservation common to the human race."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Johns regards the Hebrew laws as an independent recension of ancient custom, deeply influenced by Babylonian law.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Babel and Bible*, pp. 190, 191.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, extra volume, p. 612.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE TEMPLE AND THE TEMPLES

By the temple is meant the temple of Solomon, and by the temples, those of Babylonia and Assyria. The religious architecture of Babylonia and Assyria was characterized by its hugeness. Clay was the material, which was baked by the action of the sun or fire, and could be easily moulded into any shape. The temples were of conventional shape. The structure can be traced back long before the days of Hammurabi. The temples of Assyria were erected on the same architectural plans as those of Babylonia. There was not the same necessity for the Assyrians to use clay as building material for their temples. The country was well supplied with hard stones, which were very abundant in the mountainous districts close to Assyria. These suitable stones were used for statues, altars, and to decorate the interior and exterior of their fine edifices. The temples were solid but not beautiful, square as a rule, with the four corners in the direction of the four cardinal points. One noteworthy feature about the Babylonian and Assyrian temples was their height.

“Come, let us build a city and a tower that shall reach up to heaven,” are the ambitious words attributed to the Babylonians and Assyrians in the Valley of Shinar (Gen. xi. 4). The height of the temples was the pride of both Kings and people. The temple was to be a high place in a literal sense. Professor Jastrow thinks that the Babylonian temples were intended to be imitations of mountains.

“Each town of importance had its ‘high place,’ for the Semites, like Indians and Persians, Greeks and Romans, looked on mountains and hills as the favourite abodes of deity. The very name of Mount Hermon denotes its sacred reputation; Mount Peor had its Baal, or divine owner; Carmel (1 Kings xvii. 19) and the Mount of Olives (2 Sam. xv. 32; 1 Kings xi. 7) were holy places. In an ancient song (Deut. xxxiii. 18 *et seq.*) Zebulon and Issachar ‘call the peoples to the mountain’ (possibly Tabor), that they may ‘offer sacrifices of righteousness. . . .’ Now, Hebrew writers were well aware that the Canaanites had recognized the sanctity of these places before the advent of Israel, and the Deuteronomist (xii. 2) urges this as a reason for their destruction. For ages, however, they were treated in a more conciliatory spirit. The belief arose that they had been hallowed, not by local Baals, but by Jehovah, who had manifested Himself there to His favourite servants, the ancestors of the tribes. We have a fine example in Gen. xxviii. 10-20 of the con-



summate art with which an ancient superstition is transfigured into a revelation of Israel's God. These local worships, which it would have been hard, or rather impossible, to eradicate at once, were made subservient to a higher religion."<sup>1</sup>

The Babylonians associated the gods with the mountains. "It was a natural association of ideas, accordingly, that led the Babylonians to give to their temples the form of the dwelling which they ascribed to their gods. The temple, in so far as it was erected to serve as a habitation for the god and a homage to him, was to be the reproduction of the cosmic E-Kur, 'a mountain house,' on a small scale, a miniature Kharsag-Kurkura, the birthplace of the gods."<sup>2</sup> Temples have been discovered having names in which the idea of a mountain is introduced. The name Zikkurat, or tower, means a "high" edifice or "lofty peak." It was a tower which resembled a mountain on a small scale. The "high" edifice of the Babylonians conveyed the same idea as that which led the Canaanites and Hebrews to call their temples "high places."

The general plan of the temples was alike everywhere. There was the great court, open to the sky, and surrounded by cloisters and colonnades. Here were the houses of the priests and other ministers of the temple, the library and school, shops for the

<sup>1</sup> *Hebrew Religion*, by Addis.

<sup>2</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 613.

manufacture and sale of votive objects, even the stalls wherein the animals were kept which were intended for sacrifice. In the centre of the court stood an altar of sacrifice, with large vases for the purposes of ablution by the side of it, as well as a sea or basin of water, which derived its name from the fact that it was a symbol of the primeval "deep." The purifying effects of the water of the "deep" were transferred to that of the mimic sea, and the worshipper who entered the temple after washing in it became ceremonially clean.

The resemblances pointed out by Professor Sayce between the temple and the temples are very striking. In the building and restoration of temples and palaces by Nebuchadnezzar II. we see an example which was partially followed by Solomon, where the completion of the buildings is followed by prayer uttered by the King, and the same was done by the Israelitish King (1 Kings v.-viii.).

The temple of Solomon, like the Babylonian temples, had its two courts, its chambers for the priests, its sanctuary, and its Holy of Holies. The temple and the temples were externally mere rectangular boxes, without architectural beauty or variety of design. The temple of Solomon had no tower. They agreed in their furniture. The two altars were in the Babylonian temples and in the temple at Jerusalem. The mercy-seat and the table of shew-bread were in the temple and the temples. The bronze sea of Solomon,

with its twelve oxen, had its model in Babylonia. The twin pillars, known as Yakin and Boaz (1 Kings vii. 21), that flanked the gateway of the court in Solomon's temple, are paralleled by the two large brick columns at the entrance to the Nippur Court, and also in the temple at Eridu.

The palace of the Hebrew King adjoined the temple, in which he claimed the right of offering sacrifice, and so was the palace of Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon.

The bronze serpent which Hezekiah destroyed had its image in the bronze serpents erected in the gates of the Babylonian temples.

The internal decoration of the sanctuary was similar in Babylonia and Jerusalem.

The well-known Hebrew ark was replaced in Babylonia by a ship. The ship was dedicated to the god or goddess whose image it contained, and was often of considerable size. But in Assyria the ship developed into an ark.

The temple and the temples were served by an army of priests. The high-priest was the head of them, who in the remote past performed the functions of a King in Babylonia. The god delegated his powers to the high-priest, and allowed him to exercise them on earth. The priest was the medium through whom the deity could be approached, and in the absence of the deity the high-priest took his place. Professor Sayce points out that a new term was needed to take the place of

*patesi*, which had a secular as well as a religious significance. The new term was *sangu*, which, more especially in the Assyrian period, meant a chief-priest. Every great sanctuary had its chief-priests, who corresponded to the Hebrew "sons of Aaron," with a high-priest, or *sangam-maku*, at their head. Under them were a large number of subordinate priests and temple ministers, the sacrificers, the pourers of libations, and the anointers with oil. There were bakers, chanters, wailers, carriers of the axe and of the spear, soothsayers, etc.

The prophets of Israel and those of Babylonia and Assyria had somewhat different functions. They generally declared the will of Heaven to mankind; sometimes they predicted the future. The Babylonian prophets accompanied the army in the field; they poured out libations; they formed a class apart, "a college of prophets." In this they resembled the prophets of Israel.

The Babylonian seer was quite different from the prophet. The distinction between the two was not clearly defined in Israel. The Babylonian seer foretold the future, which was made known to him through visions and trances. Ashurbanipal narrates how before the Elamite War, after he had prayed for the aid and protection of Ishtar, "a seer slept and dreamed a prophetic dream; a vision of the night did Ishtar reveal unto him. He repeated it to me, saying: 'Ishtar, who dwelleth in Arbela, came down, and on

the right hand and on the left hung (her) quivers ; in her hand she held the bow ; she drew the sharp war-sword and held it before her. Like a mother she speaketh with thee, she calleth thee ; Ishtar, the queen of the gods, appointeth for thee a doom. . . . Eat food, drink wine, make music, exalt my divinity, until I march and the work of mine is accomplished. I will give thee thy heart's desire ; thy face shall not grow pale, thy feet shall not totter.' ” The main difference between the prophet and the seer is the mode of revelation. It was necessary that both should be without bodily blemish.

The resemblance between the Babylonian prophet and the Hebrew prophet is not clear. In Israel the prophet and the priest were quite different ; there was no such distinction in Babylonia. In Babylonia the prophet, the magician, and the necromancer were closely associated, whereas in Israel they were not.

Prophetesses, as well as priests, were employed in the temple and in the temples. It was more so in Babylonia than in Israel. It was a woman only who had the privilege of entering the sacred shrine of Bel-Merodach at Babylon ; unmarried women were consecrated to Ishtar, as well as to the Sun-god.

Sacrifices were offered in the temples. Goats and kids, sheep and lambs, oxen and calves, fish, and some kinds of birds, were among the sacrifices offered to the gods.

The scapegoat was driven into the desert like the Hebrew Azazel.

The gods demanded the first-fruits of what they had given to man.

(It is natural to think of sacrifice as an offering to the gods. Hesiod regards it as such in the well-known line, "Gifts persuade the gods, gifts persuade august kings.")

As to human sacrifice, Professor Sayce is of opinion that it was practised in Babylonia and Assyria. "As in Israel, so also in Babylonia and Assyria, human sacrifice seems to have disappeared at an early age."

Tithe had its origin in Babylonia, and was rigorously exacted for the support of the temples and priests ; and so it was in Israel.

There are similarities and differences between the Levitical law and the Babylonian ritual. The Hebrew *torāh* was derived from the Babylonian *tertu*. The technical words of the Mosaic law recur in the ritual texts of early Babylonia. The Old Testament word *kipper*, "atonement," is the Assyrian *kuppuru*, and the word *korbān*, "gift" or "benevolence," was the same as the Assyrian word *gurbannu*.

We wish to point out the resemblances between the ritual of the temples and the temple.<sup>1</sup>

A large number of expressions relating to sacrifice were common to both the temples and the temple.

<sup>1</sup> See "Ritual" in *Encyclopædia Biblica*,

In bloody sacrifices the same species of animals were employed, such as ox, sheep, goat. Preference was given to animals of a year old; sacrifices of a more advanced age were rare. Female animals were used in the temples for purifications, whereas in the temple they were used for sin offerings (Num. xv. 27).

The offering of defective animals was allowed in the temples for purposes of augury, but in the temple for free-will offerings (Lev. xxii. 23). Generally speaking, the temples and the temple required the victim to be without blemish.

As in the temples, the *sattukku*—i.e., the regular and obligatory sacrifice—was at the root of the ritual, and so it was in the temple (in the Priestly Code and more so in Ezekiel); the *tāmīd*, the regular daily offering, was made statutory, and was the centre of the whole divine service.

Unbloody sacrifices, which were systematically used in the temples, were composed of various materials, such as wine, water, oil; but their employment in the temple was only exceptional. The incense offering was unknown in the temple in the age of early Israel. It is denounced by Jeremiah (vi. 20) as a modern and outlandish innovation. The unknown author of Isaiah lxv. 3 names Babylon as the land in which sacrifices are offered in gardens and incense offered upon bricks. The incense offering of the temple after the Exile may have been borrowed from the temples of Babylonia.

There are striking points of difference between the ritual of the temples and the temple.

In the vegetable offerings of the temple only those products are mentioned which are the results of trouble and work, which represent a right of private property. Honey, cream, milk, and fruit occur often as offerings in the temples, but never among those of the temple. The wine libation is no longer an independent offering in the Priestly Code, and in Ezekiel it is prohibited altogether. It may have been prohibited on account of abuses connected with it (1 Sam. i. 14). As regards bloody sacrifices, offerings of fish and game, such as geese, peacocks, and pheasants, were excluded from the temple ritual. Fish and game belong to Yahwè, and thus were not appropriated as sacrificial gifts. The fish and game offerings are frequently mentioned on the Babylonian and Assyrian tablets as being in great favour in the temples.

The fundamental idea underlying sacrifice is not the same in the temple and the temples. The Hebrew sacrifice in its older form gave a special development to the idea of a sacral communion between God and the worshipper as represented in the act of offering; the cultus of the temples presents no trace of this. All the more prominent is the conception of the purificatory and propitiatory character of sacrifice which comes into the foreground in the Priestly Code and Ezekiel, which is conspicuous in the cultus of the Babylonian



temples. We may assume that the sin and trespass offering of the Hebrew *torāh*, although all that we know of their technique is wholly of post-exilic date, were entirely of Israelitish growth.

In the ritual of the prophets instructions were given for the sacrifice of a lamb at the gate of the house ; the blood is to be smeared on the lintels and door-posts, as well as on the huge images that guarded the entrance. The same practice is still in vogue in Egypt.

Circumcision was not universal among the Semites, for it does not seem that the Assyrians practised it ; but, still, it was common to several Semitic races, as appears from Jeremiah (ix. 25, 26, R.V.), which is the classical passage on the subject. It was also in vogue among some of the non-Semitic races, notably the Egyptians. The Hebrew ceremony, however, deviated from the primitive form in the matter of age, and the Bedouin, who circumcise boys, not infants, are nearer the original idea, for the Arabic verb meaning to circumcise signifies in Hebrew to contract affinity by marriage. The origin of the rite among the Hebrews is obscure, and as to its original meaning very divergent views have been held, which we need not enter into here.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Circumcision" in *Encyclopædia Biblica* ; *The Early History of the Hebrews*, by Sayce, p. 31 *et seq.* ; *Hebrew Religion*, by Addis, p. 43 *et seq.*



“The tabernacle of the congregation” or “tent of meeting” was of Babylonian origin.

A number of the festivals of the calendar, and the dates on which they were held in Israel, came from Babylonia.

The three great feasts of the Babylonian agriculturist resembled those of Israel, and these are supplemented by other feasts by the Israelites and the Babylonians.

Fasts and fast days, as well as feasts, were common in Babylonia, and so they were in Israel. In the Babylonian penitential psalms fasting is often alluded to.

“It is impossible not to be struck,” as Professor Sayce remarks, “by the many points of similarity between the Babylonian ritual and arrangements of the temples and that which existed among the Israelites. The temple of Solomon, in fact, was little more than a reproduction of the Babylonian sanctuary.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia*, p. 470.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>

#### HYMNS.

THAT many of the hymns preserved in Ashurbanipal's library are in a fragmentary state is most unfortunate. Consequently nothing more than the general contents can be obtained. The circumstances in which the hymns were composed are unknown to us for that reason. No date can be assigned to any of the hymns except it can be based upon internal evidence. A collection of hymns was made at different times. For instance, a collection of hymns addressed to Shamash has been found, and several hymns addressed to Marduk have been preserved. Hymns were composed for special occasions, addressed to the great gods of Babylonia; but all of them were not composed in this way. Some bear internal evidence of being merely sporadic productions, composed for other purposes than that of being placed in a ritual.

The hymns addressed to Shamash are the best that have been yet published. The two principles

<sup>1</sup> See *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, pp. 253-406.

that run through these hymns are justice and righteousness.

Here is one :<sup>1</sup>

" O Sun-God in the midst<sup>2</sup> of heaven at thy setting,  
 May the enclosure of the pure heaven greet thee ;<sup>3</sup>  
 May the gate of heaven approach thee ;  
 May the directing god, the messenger who loves thee, direct thy way.  
 In E-babbara, the seat of thy sovereignty, thy supremacy rises like the dawn.  
 May Ā, the wife whom thou lovest, come before thee with joy ;  
 May thy heart be at rest ;<sup>4</sup>  
 May the glory of thy divinity be established for thee.  
 O Shamash ! warrior hero, may thou be exalted ;  
 O lord of E-babbara, as thou marchest, may thy course be directed :  
 Direct thy path, march along the path fixed for thy course (?).  
 O Shamash ! judge of the world, director of its laws art thou."

### PRAYERS.

Prayers were used when festivals were celebrated in honour of the deities, when temples or sacred statues were dedicated to the gods, or on secular occasions, such as the completion of the building of a canal. Gudea (about 3000-2800 B.C.), after finishing a statue to his god Nin-girsu, offered the following simple and earnest prayer :

" O King, whose great strength the land cannot endure ;  
 Nin-girsu ! grant to Gudea, who has built this house, a good fate !"

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<sup>1</sup> See *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> It may be "horizon."

<sup>3</sup> "May it speak to thee of peace."

<sup>4</sup> "May thy anger depart."

All the statues of Gudea have the hands folded on the breast, in the manner of Oriental servants awaiting orders, a token of the King's continual worship and service. So we are told (2 Sam. vii. 18) that David went in and sat before the Lord.

The prayers of Nebuchadnezzar are very impressive and remarkable for their elevation of thought and felicity of diction. His inscriptions are characterized by the prayer with which they invariably close. Whether he is building a canal, improving the walls of Babylon, erecting or repairing a temple, he always adds to the description of the achievements a prayer to some god, in which he asks for divine grace and the blessings of long life and prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

“To Merodach, my lord, I prayed, I lifted up my hands. Merodach, lord, wisest of the gods, glorious prince! Thou it was who madest me, and with the sovereignty of all mankind didst invest me! Like dear life I love thy lofty image; above thine own city, Babylon, I have adorned no town in any place. Like as I love the fear of thy godhead, (and) regard the lordship, favour thou the lifting up of my hands; hear my prayer! I am the patron King that rejoiceth thine heart; the prudent minister, the patron of all thy cities. By thy command, O merciful Merodach! may the house that I have built endure for ever! may I satisfied be with the fullness of it; and therein

<sup>1</sup> *Light from the East*, by Ball, p. 204.

may I come to grey hairs, and be satisfied with children ! May I receive therein the rich tribute of the kings of the regions of all mankind ! from horizon to zenith—the places of the rising sun—may I own no enemy, have none to make me afraid ! Let my offspring therein rule the black-headed fold for evermore !”

The prayers present many striking parallels to the phraseology of the Old Testament.

Curses were expressed in the form of prayers.

Among the prayers, as well as the hymns, discovered on the tablets, some are loftier in spirit than others ; they contain a higher level of religious thought, and more pronounced ethical tendencies.

The offering of praise to the gods, whether it was for victory granted or for a favour shown, called forth the best and purest sentiments of which the individual was capable. In this we see traits of the human aspects of religion. The affections of the petitioner are betrayed in the petition he offers to the deities. We perceive the attributes that reflect the worshipper's disposition rather than the god's view of the purpose and aim of existence.<sup>1</sup>

#### PENITENTIAL PSALMS.

By the penitential psalms is meant those where a great strain is laid upon pacifying the god addressed.

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 298.

It was based upon the primitive belief that misfortunes were the result of divine wrath. The Babylonians believed that transgressions could be atoned for only by appeasing the anger of the god. But with this rigid creed a lofty and a comparatively pure ethical spirit was cherished among the Babylonians. Incantation formulæ were resorted to by the sufferer when followed by bad fortune or smitten with disease. Not only did he adopt that course, but he turned in prayer to the particular god who sent the evil, and appealed that his wrath should turn away.

Such events as defeat in war were ascribed to divine wrath. The personal tone contained in most of the penitential psalms makes them appropriate to circumstances in which the individual was involved as well as the nation. And so the psalms came to possess a national importance.

As the belief was prevalent that weal or woe depended upon the relationship between man and god, what was conceived and explained as the anger of the god prompted the individual and the nation to a greater consecration and zeal in securing the love of the god. The element of love is introduced explicitly, or is clearly implied, so as to form the necessary complement to the conception of the divine wrath.

The penitential psalms manifest the ethical and religious beliefs of the Babylonians at their best. Nowhere is the ethical side more clearly shown than in

the idea of sin expressed in them. Such misfortunes of life which could not be attributed to the presence of evil spirits, but rather to the wrath of the god, brought a deep sense of guilt to the individual. And the Babylonian believed that, consciously or unconsciously, he must have transgressed against the god. This fact reminds us of the theology of Job's comforters and many of the Psalms.

As to whether the god was really justified in being angry did not seem to have troubled the Babylonians, or whether the punishment inflicted on them was in proportion to the wrong done did not seem to have perplexed them. To the Babylonian it was not essential that the deity should be just though he was offended ; it was quite enough that the god was offended through the omission of certain rites, or through a mistake in the performance of rites, or something else. To the penitent two things stood out distinctly : the wrath of the god and the duty of appeasing that wrath.

It cannot be said that the Babylonian and Assyrian people got beyond this conception, but this conviction was quite sufficient to convince them that their misfortunes were caused by some offence. The evils which overtook the individual sufficed to convince him that he had sinned against the god. It was within this range of thoughts the penitential psalms of the Babylonians moved and had their being.

It brings to memory the Hebrew conception of sin—



that it is a "missing of the mark," having missed in some way, knowingly or unknowingly, to comply with the commands of the god under whose protection one lived. Some sharp awakenings brought home to him the startling conviction that he had "missed the mark." Disease, misfortune, defeat, drought, deluge, storms, destruction, financial losses, discord in the home, death, were some of the messengers that told the individual or the nation that the favour of the deity had been forfeited and that it should be secured again. At the same time, we must admit that within this somewhat narrow circle there was room for ethical progress, and some of the penitential psalms of the Babylonians are in tone and substance worthy to be compared with the Psalms of the Old Testament; and the Book of Job and other portions of the Old Testament could be read with edification in the light of the ideas contained in the Babylonian psalms, which are the flowers of the Babylonian religious literature.

The Babylonian psalms, as well as the Hebrew Psalms, have one similarity common to both: more advanced conception, so far from setting aside primitive ones, can live and thrive in the same atmosphere with the old. It may be more so in the Babylonian psalms.

The Assyrians adopted these psalms as they did the other features of the religious literature of the Babylonians, and enriched the collection by productions of

their own, which, however, follow closely the Babylonian type.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a psalm where the penitent addresses his goddess :

“ I, thy servant, full of sighs, call upon thee ;  
The fervent prayer of him who has sinned do thou accept.  
If thou lookest upon a man, that man lives.  
O all-powerful mistress of mankind,  
Merciful one, to whom it is good to turn, who hears sighs !”

The priest intercedes on his behalf :

“ His god and goddess being angry with him, he calls upon thee :  
Turn towards him thy countenance, take hold of his hand.”

It was difficult sometimes to know whether the sinner had offended against a god, a goddess, or against several gods. Sometimes the sinner could only guess wherein his offence consisted, because it was some misfortune that brought home to him his sense of guilt. No particular god in many cases could be specified.

“ O that the wrath of my lord's heart return to its former condition !  
O that the god who is unknown be pacified !  
O that the goddess unknown be pacified !  
O that the god known or unknown be pacified !  
O that the goddess known or unknown be pacified !  
O that the heart of my god be pacified !  
O that the god or goddess known or unknown be pacified !  
The sin that I have committed I know not.”

Fasting is resorted to by way of penance :

“ Food I have not eaten ;  
Clear water I have not drunk.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 317.

The sinner describes his wretched state :

“ Instead of food, I eat bitter tears ;  
Instead of date-wine, I drink the waters of misery ;  
For my drink I have bitter waters ;  
Instead of clothes, I am enveloped in sin.”<sup>1</sup>

### A PRAYER TO ISHTAR.

Mr. L. W. King says that the text of this prayer to Ishtar, both from the beauty of its language and from its perfect state of preservation, is one of the finest Babylonian religious compositions that has yet been recovered. The prayer is addressed to Ishtar in her exalted position as the goddess of battle, and she is identified here as Irnini (i. 105), and she is addressed (i. 12) as Gutira. Mr. King says that in the course of time Ishtar was identified by the Babylonians and Assyrians with other goddesses, and when so identified she absorbed their names, titles, and attributes.

The prayer may be divided as follows : Lines 1-41, a description of the power and splendour of the goddess. From line 42 onward the suppliant expresses his personal petitions, describing his state of affliction and praying for deliverance. Lines 107 and following contain a rubric and directions for the performance of certain ceremonies and for the due recital of the prayer.

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Jastrow, p. 322.

We can only give a selection from this unique prayer ; we must refer the reader to Mr King's translation for a complete version of it.<sup>1</sup>

We find it extremely difficult to make a selection.

1. I pray unto thee, lady of ladies, goddess of goddesses !
2. O Ishtar, queen of all peoples, directress of mankind !
3. O Irnini, thou art raised on high, mistress of the spirits of heaven ;
4. Thou art mighty, thou hast sovereign power, exalted is thy name !
5. Thou art the light of heaven and earth, O valiant daughter of the Moon-God.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

13. Thou wieldest the sceptre and the decision, the control of earth and heaven !

(The idea is that " the sceptre " represents the control of earth and " the decision " that of heaven.)

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

18. Anu, Bêl, and Ea have raised thee on high ; among the gods have they made great thy dominion.
19. They have exalted thee among all the Spirits of heaven ; they have made thy rank pre-eminent.
20. At the thought of thy name the heaven and the earth quake,
21. The gods tremble, and the spirits of the earth falter.
22. Mankind payeth homage unto thy mighty name,
23. For thou art great, and thou art exalted.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

25. Thou judgest the cause of man with justice and righteousness ;
26. Thou lookest with mercy on the violent man, and thou settest right the unruly every morning.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, edited by L. W. King, p. 223 et seq.

31. O thou glorious one, that ragest among the spirits of heaven,  
that subduest angry gods,  
32. That hast power over all princes, that controullest the sceptre  
of kings,  
33. That openest the bonds of all handmaids,  
34. That art raised on high, that art firmly established—O valiant  
Ishtar, great is thy might !  
35. Bright torch of heaven and earth, light of all dwellings,  
36. Terrible in the fight, one who cannot be opposed, strong in the  
battle !  
37. O whirlwind, that roarest against the foe and cuttest off the  
mighty !  
38. O furious Ishtar, summoner of armies !

\*                \*                \*                \*                \*

40. Where thou lookest in pity the dead man lives again, the sick  
is healed ;  
41. The afflicted is saved from his affliction when he beholdeth  
thy face !  
42. I, thy servant, sorrowful, sighing, and in distress, cry unto  
thee.  
43. Look unto me, O my lady, and accept my supplication ;  
44. Truly pity me, and hearken unto my prayer !  
45. Cry unto me, " It is enough !" and let thy spirit be appeased !

\*                \*                \*                \*                \*

52. Is anger mercy ? Then let thy spirit be appeased !  
53. May thine eyes rest with favour upon me ;  
54. With thy glorious regard truly in mercy look upon me !  
55. Put an end to the evil bewitchments of my body ; let me behold  
thy clear light !

\*                \*                \*                \*                \*

63. My heart hath taken wing, and hath flown away like a bird of  
the heavens ;  
64. I moan like a dove, night and day.  
65. I am made desolate, and I weep bitterly ;  
66. With grief and woe my spirit is distressed.  
67. What have I done, O my god and my goddess ?

68. Is it because I feared not my god or my goddess that trouble  
hath befallen me ?

\* \* \* \* \*

71. I have beheld, O my lady, days of affliction, months of sorrow,  
years of misfortune ;

73. I have beheld, O my lady, slaughter, turmoil, and rebellion.

74. Death and misery have made an end of me !

75. My need is grievous, grievous is my humiliation ;

76. Over my house, my gate, and my fields is affliction poured  
forth.

\* \* \* \* \*

81. Dissolve my sin, my iniquity, my transgression, and my offence !

82. Forgive my transgression, accept my supplication !

83. Secure my deliverance, and let me be loved and carefully  
tended !

84. Guide my footsteps in the light, that among men I may  
gloriously seek my way !

\* \* \* \* \*

88. Thou art the ruler : let, then, my torch flame forth !

89. May my scattered strength be collected !

90. May the fold be wide, and may my pen be bolted fast !

91. Receive the abasement of my countenance, give ear unto my  
prayer ;

92. Truly pity me, and [accept my supplication] !

93. How long, O my lady, wilt thou be angry and thy face be turned  
away ?

94. How long, O my lady, wilt thou rage and thy spirit be full  
of wrath ?

95. Incline thy neck, which [is turned] away from my affairs, and  
set prosperity before my face ;

96. As by the solving waters of the river, may thine anger be  
dissolved !

97. My mighty foes may I trample like the ground ;

98. And those who are wroth with me mayest thou force into sub-  
mission and crush beneath my feet !

99. Let my prayer and my supplication come unto thee,

100. And let thy great mercy be upon me,  
 101. That those who behold me in the street may magnify thy  
     name,  
 102. And that I may glorify thy godhead and thy might before  
     mankind !  
 103. Ishtar is exalted ! Ishtar is queen !  
 104. My lady is exalted ! My lady is queen !  
 105. Irnini, the valiant daughter of the Moon-God, hath not a rival !

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

The prayer of Ishtar strikes us as being very similar to some of the best sentiments expressed in the Old Testament, and we cannot help thinking that the devotional literature of the Babylonians and Assyrians was known to the Hebrews.

Dr. R. W. Rogers, in his recent book,<sup>1</sup> gives a few striking passages from the Old Testament in order to show the influence that the Babylonian Creation Story exerted over the poets and prophets of Israel :

“ O Jehovah, God of hosts,  
 Who is a mighty one, like unto Thee, O Jehovah ?  
 And Thy faithfulness is round about Thee.  
 Thou rulest the pride of the sea :  
 When the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them.  
 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain ;  
 Thou hast scattered Thine enemies with the arm of Thy strength.  
 The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine :  
 The world and the fullness thereof, Thou hast founded them.  
 The north and the south, Thou hast created them.”

PS. lxxxix. 8-12.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 133-137.

“ This poet has heard of Tiāmat and her story. Here Tiāmat is called Rahab, and it is not Marduk, but Jehovah, who has slain her. Just as the elder Bel, or Ellil, was displaced, as we have seen, by Marduk, so here Marduk is displaced by Jehovah. He has ‘ broken Rahab in pieces.’ Nay, more: He has scattered His enemies—that is, the helpers of Rahab. And then, *then*, after He has defeated Rahab, He creates the world. It is certainly the Babylonian Tiāmat and Marduk story which this poet has in his mind and is using poetically to glorify Jehovah. And, be it observed, he is following exactly the same order of progression as we have just seen in the Babylonian story—first the conflict, then the creation.”

The poet who wrote the Book of Job was influenced by the Babylonian myths, which he utilized to describe the mighty works of Jehovah :

“ He stirreth up the sea with His power,  
And by His understanding He smiteth through Rahab.  
By His Spirit the heavens are garnished ;  
His hand hath pierced the swift serpent.”

JOB xxvi. 12, 13.

“ God will not withdraw His anger ;  
The helpers of Rahab do stoop under Him.”

JOB ix. 13.

Amos’s passing allusion to them shows that he was influenced by these legends. In describing the impotence of the sinners to escape, the prophet says :



"Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent,<sup>1</sup> and it shall bite them."—AMOS ix. 3.

"And in a fine passage in the Psalter leviathan is plainly enough the figure of Tīāmat":

"Yet God is my King of old,  
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.  
Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength:  
Thou breakest the heads of the sea-monsters in the waters.  
Thou breakest the heads of leviathan in pieces;  
Thou gavest him to be food to the people inhabiting the wilderness.  
Thou didst cleave fountain and flood:  
Thou driedst up mighty rivers.  
The day is Thine, the night also is Thine:  
Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.  
Thou hast set all the borders of the earth:  
Thou hast made summer and winter."

PS. lxxiv. 12-17.

"Here is proof enough that these Babylonian myths were in current circulation in Israel, and that poets and prophets knew how to adorn their message with them."

<sup>1</sup> The serpent means Rahab.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE INSCRIPTIONS AND HIGHER CRITICISM

WHAT are the effects of the discoveries which have been made in Babylonia and Assyria upon the results of Biblical criticism? What bearing has the one upon the other? The inscriptions may have two kinds of testimonies: a direct testimony and an indirect testimony. The direct testimony is decisive; the value of the indirect testimony depends on whether it is sufficiently circumstantial and precise to make the settlement of a certain question highly probable. To quote Dr. Driver:<sup>1</sup> "Examples of the direct testimony of archæology have been furnished by the Books of Kings, though, as it happens, these have related mostly to points on which there has been no controversy, and on which the Biblical statements have not been questioned. It would be an example of the second kind of archæological testimony if, to take an imaginary case, the Book of Genesis had described the patriarchs as visiting various places inhabited by tribes to which there were no references in later books of the Old

<sup>1</sup> *Authority and Archæology*, pp. 144, 145.

Testament, but which the evidence of the monuments had now shown to be correctly located ; under such circumstances the agreement with the facts would be strong evidence that the narrator drew his information from trustworthy sources. In cases of the third kind of archaeological testimony, if its value is to be estimated aright, attention must be paid to the circumstances of the individual case. . . . In the abstract, again, there is no reason why Hebrew names of a particular type should not have been formed at an early period ; but if an induction from materials supplied by the Old Testament itself renders the fact doubtful, the circumstances that other Semitic nations framed names of this kind at an early period does not prove that the Hebrews did the same.

“ The methods of Sayce and Hommel are impossible and unscientific. We cannot conclude that, because the Egyptians and the Babylonians and the Canaanites were civilized, and knew how to write and the like, the Hebrews, therefore, did the same. We cannot estimate the civilization of the rude Saxons when they conquered Britain by our knowledge of the Britons whom they conquered. The Saxons drove out the Britons, accepting from them neither their civilization nor their religion. In this period succeeding their conquest of civilized Britain we know that the Saxons were unlettered heathen, although the country which they had conquered was both civilized and Christian. What

both have done is this : Professor Sayce, in *The Early History of the Hebrews*, has tried to carry back into remote antiquity the history and religion of Israel. Both have drawn a picture of primitive civilization of Babylonia, Egypt, and Arabia, as we know it from the monuments, and have urged that, since these countries with which Israel came into contact had reached a considerable degree of civilization at the time of Moses, therefore, of necessity, Israel had done the same. They have made much use of the revelation of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets in regard to the revelation of Palestine before the entrance of the Israelites. If the country which the Israelites conquered possessed a high civilization ; if the land out of which the Israelites came—namely, Egypt—possessed a high civilization ; if the land with which Israel was connected—namely, Babylonia and Arabia—possessed a high civilization, then the Hebrews must have been civilized, capable of producing codes of law, . . . and a religion already highly developed at the time that they entered Canaan.”

Professor Sayce and Dr. Hommel<sup>1</sup> have maintained that the inscriptions have disproved many of the conclusions of the critics. What has struck us is the practical agreement that exists between Professor Sayce and a Biblical critic like Dr. Driver. We fail to see that there is any real difference between the two eminent scholars with regard to the historical value of

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Hebrew Tradition illustrated by the Monuments.*

the Old Testament. Professor Sayce believes that our knowledge of Babylonia goes back to "eight or nine thousand years ago,"<sup>1</sup> an opinion which cannot be harmonized with the chronology of the Old Testament. "The consistent exaggeration of numbers on the part of the Chronicler shows us from a historical point of view his unsupported statements must be received with caution. . . . He cared as little for history in the modern European sense of the word as the Oriental of to-day, who considers himself at liberty to embellish or modify the narrative he is repeating in accordance with his fancy or the moral he wishes to draw from it."<sup>2</sup> . . . The account [of the conquest of Babylon] given by the Book of Daniel is at variance with the testimony of the inscriptions. . . . Darius the Mede is, in fact, a reflection into the past of Darius, the son of Hystaspes. . . . The same monumental evidence which has vindicated the historical accuracy of the Scriptural narrative in other places has here pronounced against it. The story of Belshazzar's fall is not historical in the modern sense of the word 'history.'"<sup>3</sup>

"Professor Sayce, it is to be observed, though he comes forward ostensibly as an enemy of criticism, nevertheless makes admissions which show that he recognizes many of its conclusions to be true. Thus he

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia*, p. 260.

<sup>2</sup> *Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 464.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 526, 528, 531.

not only asserts the compilatory character of the Pentateuch (*Early History of the Hebrews*, pp. 129, 134, 203), but in Genesis he finds (p. 132 *et seq.*) two groups of narratives and 'two Abrahams'—the one 'an Abraham born in one of the centres of Babylonian civilization, who is an ally of Amorite chieftains, and whom the Hittites of Hebron address as a "mighty prince"' (the Abraham of Gen. xiv. and of P); the other 'an Abraham of the Bedawin camp-fire, a nomad whose habits are those of the rude independence of the desert, whose wife kneads the bread, while he himself kills the calf with which his guests are entertained' (the Abraham of J and E). The former narrative he considers, though upon very questionable grounds, to have been based upon contemporary documents; the latter to have been 'like the tales of their old heroes recounted by the nomad Arabs in the days before Islam as they sat at night round their camp-fires. The details and spirit of the story have necessarily caught the colour of the medium through which they have passed' (p. 62). All the principal details of the patriarchs' lives are contained in J and E; but if these narratives were handed down for generations by 'nomad reciters' round their camp-fires, what better guarantee of their historical truth do we possess than if their memory had been preserved in the manner supposed above?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, by Driver, p. li.

It is astonishing how Professor Sayce agrees with the views of the Higher Critics, but it is more wonderful how he condemns them!<sup>1</sup> The conservative theologians welcome Dr. Sayce as "Daniel come to judgment," but after reading his works carefully they must see that he gives as much satisfaction as Portia gave to Shylock.<sup>2</sup>

No inscriptions have proved that Moses wrote the whole of the Pentateuch as it is in the Bible, or that the story of Balaam is literally true, or that Isaiah wrote the whole of the book that goes by that name.

"That a story accurately reflects geography does not necessarily mean that it is a real transcript of history—else were the Book of Judith the truest man ever wrote, instead of being what it is, a pretty piece of fiction. Many legends are wonderful photographs of scenery. And, therefore, let us at once admit that, while we may have other reasons for the historical truth of the patriarchal narratives, we cannot prove this on the ground that their itineraries and place-names are correct. Or, again, that the Book of Joshua, in marking tribal boundaries, gave us a detailed list of towns, the most of which we are able to identify, does not prove anything about the date or authorship of these lists, nor the fact of the deliberate partition

<sup>1</sup> See *Monumental Facts and Higher Criticism Fancies*.

<sup>2</sup> *The New World*, March, 1899, p. 30.

of the land in Joshua's time. Again, that Israel's conquests under Moses on the east of the Jordan went so far north as described, is not proved by the discovery in these days of the various towns mentioned. In each of these cases all that is proved is that the narrative was written in the land by someone who knew the land, and this has never been called in question. The date, the accuracy of the narrative, will have to be discussed on other grounds."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the inscriptions throw light upon other ancient nations does not prove the history of Israel. Professor Sayce says: "I have long since pointed out that the details of the purchase of the cave of Machpelah by Abraham are in strict conformity with the requirements of Babylonian commercial law as it was administered in the Abrahamic age. . . . The law which lies behind the narratives of Genesis is the law, not of Moses, but of Khammurabi. Thus the action of Sarah in giving Hagar to Abraham and of Rachel in giving Bilhah to Jacob when they themselves were childless was in strict accordance with the Babylonian code."<sup>2</sup> It is true that Hammurabi's code of laws was nine hundred years older than Moses', and was in force for ages after the death of Moses, but nothing is said on the tablets about Abraham purchasing the cave of Machpelah. Sarah may have given Hagar to Abra-

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> *Monumental Facts and Higher Criticism Fancies*, p. 80.



ham, and Rachel may have given Bilhah to Jacob, but the inscriptions have no record of the events.

“ The argument which has been advanced to show that the narrative of the purchase of the grave of Machpelah (Gen. xxiii.) is the work of a contemporary hand breaks down completely. The expressions alleged in proof of the assertion are not *confined* to the age of Hammurabi; they one and all occur, in some cases repeatedly, in the period of the Kings, and even later: they consequently furnish no evidence that the narrative was written at any earlier date. There is no antecedent reason why Abraham should not have purchased a plot of ground near Hebron from the native inhabitants of the place; but to suppose that this is proven, or even made probable, by archæology, is simply to misinterpret the evidence which it furnishes. As regards the Joseph narratives, it is undeniable that they have an Egyptian colouring; they contain many allusions to Egyptian usages and institutions, which can be illustrated from the Egyptian monuments. Moreover, as Kittel has pointed out, this colouring is common to both J and E. As it is improbable that *two* writers would have added it independently, it may be inferred that it was inherent in the common tradition which both represent. This is a circumstance tending to show that in its origin the Egyptian element was considerably anterior to either J or E, and increases the probability that it

rests ultimately upon a foundation in fact. On the other hand, the extent of the Egyptian colouring of these narratives must not be overestimated, nor must the conclusions drawn from it be exaggerated. The allusions are not of a kind to prove close and personal cognizance of the facts described : institutions, officials, etc., are described in *general* terms, not by their specific *Egyptian* names. Egypt, it must be remembered, was not far distant from Canaan, and, as the prophecies of Isaiah, for instance, show, there was frequent intercourse between the two countries during the monarchy. Isaiah, in the single chapter (xix.) which he devotes to Egypt, shows considerable acquaintance with the peculiarities of the country. It is a complete illusion to suppose that the Joseph narratives can be shown by archæology to be contemporary with the events recorded (notice in this connection the absence of particulars in the narrative which a contemporary would almost naturally mention, such as the personal name of the Pharaoh, and the place in Egypt at which he held his Court : the names Potiphar, etc., can hardly be genuine ancient names) or translated from a hieratic papyrus. The statement<sup>1</sup> that the Egypt which these narratives bring before us is in particular that of the Hyksos age is destitute of foundation."<sup>2</sup>

"It is highly probable that the critics who doubt

<sup>1</sup> Sayce's *The Early History of the Hebrews*, p. 90 ; cf. p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Driver's *Genesis*, p. 1 *et seq.*

the presence of any historical basis for the narratives of the patriarchs are ultra-sceptical ; but their scepticism cannot, at least at present, be refuted by the testimony of the monuments.”<sup>1</sup>

“ A great deal of the illustration afforded by the monuments relates to facts of language, to ideas, institutions, and localities ; but these, as a rule, are of a permanent nature, and, until they can be proved to be limited to a particular age, their occurrence or mention in a given narrative is not evidence that it possesses the value of contemporary testimony.”<sup>2</sup>

The inscriptions are not at enmity with Higher Criticism, nor is Higher Criticism jealous of Archæology. The best feeling exists between them and the Old Testament. Both are handmaids working together in their search after truth.

<sup>1</sup> *Authority and Archæology*, Edited by Driver, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.



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